

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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THE DEAR GIRL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "BELLA DONNA," "NEVER FORGOTTEN," &c.

CHAPTER XVI. THE OLD HOME.

MR. WEST, far away in England, read the account of the terrible storm at Dieppe, which later, indeed, travelled up some of the finest parts of the French country, unroofing houses, scattering produce, swelling rivers, and doing other mischief. All this, with the details of the gallant rescue, was duly set out in the vivacious *Galignani*—most pleasant of caterers, unwearied in his effort to find variety, and duly posted by Miss West. He wondered who this Colonel Vivian was, who sustained the English name with such heroism, and who was suffering from dangerous wounds; having been dashed out of the boat against a spar; and for a moment, as he turned over the various names of the places, it occurred to him that it might be the handsome stranger he had met as he came away. The uneasiness was but for a moment. Had he seen the French paper, the *Gazette*, he would have been amused by an account from quite a different point of view. For, characteristically, after the first official sympathy and congratulation, and the mayor had personally paid his compliments to Davy and his companions, popular feeling seemed to incline altogether to the two Frenchmen who had assisted, and the whole matter became only one more instance of the "*gloire du peuple Français*." This was the stuff with which her marine was to be filled, with very faint allusion to the collaboration of Jean Davi et de M. Vivienne (named, of course, after the well-known street in Paris), "*qui se comporta avec une admirable fermeté et un phlegme vraiment Britannique*." Decorations presently arrived for the two brave French heroes; but "Jean Davi" and his friends were suffered to depart in the collier.

Mr. West stayed in London a few days, where he had not been for some years. He went about with fresh curiosity, admiring the changes that had taken place in his absence. Some feeling like "What a charming world, what a pretty one, and what curious things are to be seen in it!" rose in his mind. Hitherto he had passed all these things by. He was now awakening as from a dream. The first

thing he determined on was to go down to Westown, and see the old place.

Westown was in the pleasant county of Hertfordshire, among the stately woods which spread out towards Stevenage. It was a little estate, with a modest red brick house of about a hundred years old, but of an older pattern.

He had not been here since he was eighteen or twenty. It seemed to him double the time; an age ago; a miserable era of convulsion and gloom, as though he had been in a jail for some crime, and from which he always kept his eyes turned away. Yet, as he came back now, he had no such feelings. He had given no notice of his coming, went down by coach, was "dropped" at an inn which he well knew, and where he took a chaise on to Westown.

He reached it about six o'clock in the evening, and drew up at the gateway, which seemed the entrance to some old churchyard; so wild and rank was it in the fulness of moss and ivy, and every straggling luxuriance which overgrew it. The rusty gate, whose hinge had worn away, hung all awry. No one came to open it; so he got down, and, with the driver's aid, lifted it back, then walked up the avenue slowly. It might have been a path through the fields, and was almost indistinguishable. Then he came on the house itself, compact, low, and of that cheerful kindly red, the tone of which is now as much lost to us as the Sèvres blue. It, too, was all overgrown with a wild greenery, lank and drooping, from among which, however, the patches of cheerful colour peeped out brightly, like a young girl's healthy cheek from under a veil. No wonder; it was nearly a twenty years' growth, unrestricted and unchecked.

And old man opened the door, and looked out at him with impatience and doubt. "What do you want?" he said. "The family don't stop here, and never will; and it's not to be let."

"Why, don't you remember me, Wilkes?" said Mr. West, gently.

The old man peered again, started, and then said, slowly and hesitatingly, "What, Master Gilbert?" He did not go into the rapture which is, alas! like so many other things, conventional. The weeping and covering hands with kisses of old servants has passed out. Perhaps this member of the community received "the old master" with misgivings. His pleasant tenure and long

rule was to be disturbed. He had his family there, kept up part of the garden, sold the fruit, and did very well indeed. Old servants, indeed! The inconvenient side of that relation has been often dwelt on as almost comic; but now *we* have become the old servants, and are ungrateful and thankless to them, for all their kindness while they stayed with us.

Old Wilkes, however, was a good soul. There was a fire burning in the study. "Well, Mr. Gilbert," he said that night, when he had come up to gossip a little, "I mind this room nigh twenty year ago, on that night when the master, poor man, heard tell of you and the curate's little daughter, and sent me out to look for you and bring you in here."

"I remember it, Wilkes," said West, looking steadily in the fire, "and it has risen before me often since. It was a terrible night."

He sat pensively, looking at the picture before him; and yet in Dieppe, when in the little French rooms, when the scene came back on him, his sister had seen him rise abruptly, and almost rush away to walk. If it would *not* leave him, he might fly from it. She always knew what this meant. There was a change now.

"It was a sin and a shame, and I told him so," said the old servant. "It was no use, and it had gone past curing. Better have married her, though she were a beggarly curate's daughter, than——"

"Than have her die so miserably, Wilkes," he said.

"You might have done it, Mr. Gilbert, I often thought since. The old master was quick-tempered, but he'd have got over it in a year or two."

"No, never, never, Wilkes," said West, getting up to walk about. "I knew him, too. He swore to me on that old Bible which he was always reading, that if I went on with it, he would make it his life's work to hunt her and her father to the death; and he could do it, you know. You remember poor Holden, his tenant?"

"Ay, sir; he worked him well enough."

"I thought it for the best. I meant well, though I know what people said—that I gave her up, poor child, to save my estate."

"Ay; they said *that*, sure enough."

"I was sure they did. I was innocent, Wilkes; but I suffered for it. Eighteen years was a long atonement."

"So it were; so it were."

"And if I had only waited, or gained a little time—just four years more, when he died——"

"Well," said the old man, "I'm after thinking, though, wouldn't she have been living to this moment, but for that? So you see that it's a long time after all; and givin' up your whole life, Mr. Gilbert, in these furrin parts to repentance. Ah, the poor old place; it will never have the family in it again. And, indeed, so best, so best; for now it's not fit, and it's a scandal, so it is, the way it's in."

West turned to look at him, smiling. "Well, Wilkes, my old friend, I have some news for you. There has been enough of misery and melancholy, and I see no use in going on with that. Eighteen years is long enough, surely; and if we were to die a thousand times, we can't mend what is past. I begin to think we can show grief and feeling better by doing our duties than by moping, and pining, and idling. So do you know, Wilkes, what has brought me down?"

"Oh, how can I say, Mr. Gilbert? Maybe this, and maybe that; maybe one thing, maybe t'other."

He was growing dry and uneasy. Mr. West did not see it.

"What do you say to this news, my good old friend? We shall be coming back here, and shall open the old place once more. Clear away all this; pull down, and put in thorough repair. What do you say to that?"

"Repair!" said the old servant, testily; "why, it would take forty-five thousand pounds—no less—to do that."

This number was his favourite estimate of expense, size, time—any object that he had seen being forty-five times the height of that house, or as far off as forty-five times the road from here to London. But he did not receive the news with welcome.

"Why, it will take forty-five men, no less, every day—every day—for a year. Repairs, indeed! You may as well pull every stone of it to the ground!"

"No fear of that, Wilkes. A clever fellow is coming down to-morrow to look at it. He knows what to do, and will take care that nothing shall be touched but what is necessary. We shall turn in the workmen, too. Lots of employment for the labourers about. Clear the place in time; give these trees breathing-room."

"Then there's few labourers you'd get about here. Since the labour was stopped fifteen years ago, who was to employ them?"

"They'll come fast enough, never fear, Wilkes, too many of them, I'm afraid. And then for the furnishing and decorating; and you, Wilkes, shall look after it. What would you like to be, now? Steward, butler, what? Choose yourself, now."

"Oh, that's all well enough, Mr. Gilbert. Where would the like of me get my years and strength for *that*? But see here, Mr. Gilbert," continued the old man, slowly, "what's this for? Is it that you're bringing home some one—a slip of a creature?"

"I don't say that, Wilkes. Why, wouldn't you like one of the old stock to be here?"

"It's a foolish thing, and always was a foolish thing," went on the old man, "and leads to no good. The keeper up yonder there, a man of a good fifty, took up with a child of twenty, only two year ago, and where is he now? He's there; but where is *she*?"

"My good old friend," said West, a little provoked, "you are getting foolish, and talk

absurdly. I am not a gamekeeper, nor fifty either, nor forty, for that matter."

"It won't do, and it never does," went on Mr. Wilkes, in the same discontented strain. "It's folly, and ends in folly, or worse. If you're for pulling down the old place, and cutting the trees, to please a child with a pretty face, mind you've had the warning."

"But I've had no supper, Wilkes," said Mr. West, a little impatiently. "The old kitchen chimney draws still, I know. I saw the smoke. See what they can do for me, like a good old fellow."

It was a curious night for Gilbert West. Later, when the little meal was done, and a bottle of the old wine found in the cellar drunk, he himself took a lamp and the keys, and walked over the ancient house. Everywhere was decay; the paper was falling from the walls, the boards were decayed. He paused in every corner, for with each was associated some scene or memory. Here was his father's bedroom, and that bedstead, whose canopy shook and nodded at him like the plumes of a catafalque. From that bed had angry, trembling arms waved and menaced him; from that bed had fiery eyes flashed, and an angry voice thundered expulsion, misery, punishment. At the foot of that bed he had made a weak submission. Here, below, was the library, the books mouldy and damp, the air close, where another scene had taken place. A small trembling figure—a pretty, pale, trembling girl—had pleaded for herself and for her father, curate to the old church whose tower he could see from the top window; and here, where the poachers and vagrants were brought in and judged, was she also sentenced. These things came back on him more vividly than ever they had done during his lonely walks up the bleak hills over Dieppe; and, with something like reproach, he asked himself "how he could ever bring himself to forget them?" But a hundred suggestions—delusive reasonings—came rushing in to reassure him. What is logic to one in his state? Was his life to go by in idle moaning over the past, in vain reverie over old ruins, old moral tombstones, instead of practical work, practical usefulness, joined, if you will, to a tender and judicious recollection of what was gone? Eighteen years of dismal wandering was surely a handsome homage enough. Yet somehow, as he lay down to rest in his old boy's room, he seemed to hear rung at his ear the awkward warning of the old servant.

CHAPTER XVII. A WRECK.

On the next day arrived Mr. Jenkinson, the clever and "adapting" young architect, who was later to develop into the well-known reviver of the mediæval style, and who was indeed now studying the best models at home and abroad, and surely laying the foundation of the great reputation he later earned. How many of the asylums, poor-houses, institutions, churches, with which our happy England is dotted over,

fitted thickly, dappled brick structures—piebald almost—owe their inspiration to him and his genius! In little rows of almshouses, dainty showy little gems, gables, and spires, and an arched colonnade running in front, he is specially happy. No one manipulates coloured bricks like him, or with such surprising servility of fancy—who does not know "middle-age" Jenkinson, as he is pleasantly styled in the profession? Many of our noblest monster hotels—dashing and florid in the conception, running wild in windows—and railway stations, are his creation. A spirited young artist, he ran down to Westown, and was walking gaily round the house, with oblong book and pencil in hand, his head put well back. Mr. West wondered at his fertility of device. If one thing did not suit, he had another ready in a second. In twenty minutes he had the whole arranged; "we run up a short stumpy campanile at the corner, to give a rooco look, and break the monotony; a wooden verandah running round the corner at the other end; bow-windows, and terrace-work, and vases." Inside, we break in a door here," "throw out a window there, take in these two little closets to the hall, and get up a short mediæval stair. All this was what he called mere patching and piecing, and would take little or no money—a bagatelle. Perhaps middle-age Jenkinson's principle is not such a bad one after all, and this judicious touching might save many an old house.

Mr. West remained three days, and before he went saw an ornamental gardener, and many labourers busy with the clearing. The place was, indeed, a perfect jungle. As he looked on the bright morning from the steps, he seemed to see Lucy's figure moving down the walk that ran up the centre. He had, indeed, often described it to her, and her eyes used to quicken with interest as he spoke. She revered those old places. "And the quicker you get all done," he said, from the window of his chaise, "the better." The old retainer, Wilkes, still dissatisfied at "the rookem-rackem" work going on—such was his strange phrase—turned away, shaking his head, as the chaise drove off.

In London again, Mr. West found plenty to do. The time was indeed too short. He lighted on old friends. He was to them as one returned from beyond the seas. He had been called to the Bar, and went down to search out some friends of the profession. Many, indeed, had often mentioned him in his absence, and said that if West had only stuck to the profession he would have been at the top of the tree. Wonderful tree! Surprising climbers! And yet those perched on that uncomfortable apex looking down and seeing those below crawling up, may wonder and smile at the infinite labour and pain of the progress, the sore and torn hands, the bleeding marks, to say nothing of the maimed and bruised who have fallen, and lying dead or wounded thickly round the root. Mr. Justice Banting had been heard to ask what had become of that intelligent young

fellow who had been, with Colter, Q.C., in Tox and Tyrrell. West went to see Fox Selby, who had started with himself, and was now a faded rusty Q.C., with no time to snatch his dinner, up half the night—in short, what is called, “doing admirably” at the Bar. Fox Selby looked up at him, weak-eyed and fretful. He was peering into a little ocean of briefs bubbling up before him like waves. He recollected his old friend, and was as glad to see him as such a body could be. In a moment he had asked him to dine on—let him see—Sunday.

On Sunday Mr. West went, and found his friend, whom he had left a cheerful bachelor with no responsibility, with a stout wife and seven children. The eldest girl was sixteen. After dinner, Mr. West asked about other friends, and then came to what was on his mind—Harcourt Dacres.

To be sure, Fox Selby had lost sight of him for some time. Used to know him when he went circuit. He was a good amusing creature, would make you laugh by the hour; but, between ourselves, was a man one should give a very wide berth to—a fellow that would ask you for a five-pound note on the day he was introduced to you. Mr. Selby mentioned this after a pause, and with mystery, as one of the most heinous crimes in the decalogue. Mr. West was prepared for it, and not so shocked as the other expected. “You know,” Selby went on, “there are stories about him—shady histories—borrowing from the young fellows just called. I don’t vouch for it, you know; but the poor devil couldn’t help himself—body and soul, he belonged to the Jews.”

This was the point, and Mr. West soon found what he wished to know—that a certain Isaacs was his chief creditor, and had nearly caught him when he was here last. He was told many a little history of him, having a dramatic interest in those details of shifts, and struggles, and desperate devices, which are, indeed, culpable, but are the gaspings of a drowning man struggling to keep his mouth above water.

For a week nearly Mr. West was busy following up this clue—visiting the strange dens where money-lenders lived, and having strange interviews with them. His business-like practical ways did something, his engagement for future settlement did more; everything was happily smoothed away, and Mr. Isaacs complimented him, and said nothing would give him greater pleasure than to do business *personally* with Mr. West; at which the latter bowed and smiled.

“She will be more pleased with this,” he thought, as he came away, “than with the house.”

This action and business was like the sea-side, or change of air. He enjoyed success. His sister wrote regularly, with a little news of the place, how Doctor Macan and Doctor White were raging against each other in the most scandalous way; how

there was a frantic craze to rush after the Guernsey Beauforts; how Mr. Blacker was more ridiculous and absurd than ever, and fast losing his head. But there was nothing about Lucy. He had, indeed, knowing her want of sympathy with this family, begged of her not to see much of them: “My dear Margery, I see you do not like them, and why should you punish yourself or punish them by being disagreeable? Much better keep away. She will write herself.”

Then he went down to Westown, saw that dexterous workmen had done wonders, and staying a few days, came up again. He was pleased with all this work.

“Now,” he said, “if I could only restore him with Sir John Trotter.” This seemed a difficult, almost a hopeless, business. Yet his spirits rose with the difficulty. He had a Scotch friend in London, whom he made out, and who knew another friend who was very intimate with Sir John. With this gentleman West was made acquainted, meeting him at a little dinner. “As for Sir John,” said he, “he is the most terrible little schemer in the world, and it is infinitely hard to approach him; but this moment, I am afraid, is the worst you could have chosen. His son’s illness has assumed a very unfortunate shape; in fact, as I heard this evening, something very like this,” and he touched his own forehead with his finger. “He has got his little borough, and he thinks he can move the empire with it; he thinks every one should be on his knees to him for this tremendous political lever. There was an Irish barrister he met, and delighted him with singing songs and telling stories, but who treated him in a very free-and-easy way, and, I believe, told him to be off with himself and his borough.” This character lived, as we have seen, at Trotterstown, N.B., and Mr. West, getting a letter of introduction, went down by the coach on the very next morning.

Inside was a sharp-looking, long-faced, sallow passenger—professional evidently. This gentleman was reading with a sort of challenging manner, his head on one side, a thick volume in yellow paper covers, and which Mr. West knew to be a French book. He was amused by the unconscious behaviour of the gentleman, who, at about every second page, moved uneasily in his place, turned over the leaf angrily, and uttered a whispered sound of impatience. It was like a discussion going on between a smooth, fluent arguer, whom nothing could put out, and an eager, angry opponent, who had not much command of language. At last he said aloud, “Pish! arrant rubbish! Who ever heard the like?” And Mr. West could not help laughing.

The other laughed too. “I am as absurd as this fellow,” he said; “but really these Frenchmen try one’s patience so much with their elegant generalities. Now, here’s this Poisson,” he added, turning round the cover of his book, “a fellow who enjoys a reputation. Poisson on Delusions. You know the book; fifth edi-

tion, and all that. Yet positively one-half is fine writing. Fancy one of our medical fellows writing such stuff. Bosh! I can't read French well. Here is the English of it: 'There is nothing more miserable than the condition of these poor creatures. Let us picture their condition a moment. The night sets in—the door of the cell is closed. He thinks of his friends. "Oh, come to me and help me in my abandonment," he cries.' And I assure you, sir, half a dozen pages of that stuff; and that's a medical book, sir!"

With this introduction, the two gentlemen grew friendly and communicative. It came out presently the stranger knew France very well, and Dieppe too. "Passed through it the other day. The fact is, there is an establishment near Paris in which I have two or three patients. You know, all that is my department. I dare say you have seen or heard of Adams on Idiocy. Well, I am Adams, and I do a good deal in the idiocy way. The French are more humane and skilful in their treatment, though when they come to theory, like this fellow, they break down. No, Poisson, my boy; you are a charlatan. I assure you the quantity of miles I have to get over, flying from one part of the world to the other to see this and that patient, is astonishing, and very fatiguing. Now, I am posting down to a baronet, who has got something wrong with his son—a great trial for him—an old friend of mine."

"What! Sir John Trotter?" said Mr. West, eagerly. "I was going to him also."

"Really?" cried the other, "a brother, a rival, a double-horse power. No?"

Mr. West smiled, and set him right. A long journey, a day and a night, and such companionship, dining together, travelling together, in those days often made warm friendships; and when they reached the Scotch town, and took a chaise together to go out to Trotterstown, the physician had learned what was his companion's errand, and had promised to aid it in every way. It was a gloomy hill, and they found Sir John to be a strange, short, wiry, eccentric little man. He was, besides, a nineteenth-century Jacobite, and had portraits and relics of "Charles Edward," and talked of the Pretender as if he were alive. The misfortune that was coming on his son seemed to affect him very little as compared with politics; and the physician's introduction of his friend as a gentleman whom he met on the road, and who had some business in that part of the country, seemed to him quite a matter of course. Politics was his craze, and he talked them at dinner, inveighing against what he called the "arrant old Whigs of 1688," who were the ruin of this country. "The present Royal line, sir, is effete. We want the true old stock back again. I am told it still exists in a Neapolitan house. Ah, if that could be followed up, and relations opened with them, there would be plenty found to rally round the old standard."

Mr. West had travelled, had seen that part of Italy where this royal house flourished, and, to the great interest of his host, described all of them minutely, especially the heir of the house, about whom Sir John was very curious. Sir John was a complete oddity, and the physician said, later, the infirmity of the son was but a stage off. Then, coming to talk of the French and Dieppe, the baronet started off:

"By the way, there was an Irishman I had to do with who lived there. I wonder what's become of him? He behaved very badly—a wild, scatterbrained fellow, but still uncommonly pleasant. I assure you he sang 'Charley is my darling,' in this very room, in the most ravishing way. It runs in my ears now. You could hear the pipes and the Highlanders coming up the street—as fine a thing as ever I heard. He spoke very free and easy, but independently. I couldn't blame him. What a voice and spirit! A true Celt! a true Celt, sir!"

With the baronet in this tone, it was not difficult, it may be conceived, for Mr. West to accomplish what he came for. And he went his way that night, after Sir John had seen him out to his carriage, with an assurance that he would be very glad to see Mr. Daeres there again, talk the matter over, and hear his noble-spirited friend join in "Charlie is my darling!"

Such were Mr. West's adventures during nearly six weeks of a time which he afterwards looked back to as one of the pleasant eras in his life. The clouds had broken; there was a tranquil sunlight over the sweetest flowers. The fair objects of daily life seemed to bask in this sunshine, and in his journeys and progresses. Sometimes through the long night he had no solitude, but a calm, tranquil happiness, an endless succession of pleasant pictures, an ineffable sense of looking forward, and a confidence for the delightful future that was approaching. He had by long practice during those solitary walks when he was in a different mood, trained his mind to an endless play, and it could entertain him, as he walked, with perpetual pictures. This that obedient servant will do, if it only gets practice. Thus he had always found himself good and interesting company. But the picture, thus inexhaustible in its variety of patterns, was one where was a gentle face of trusting affection in the centre—with the fluttering emotions of surprise, joy, delight, as he unfolded his news.

So at last, all being happily accomplished, he turned his face once more to the little French port, and set off for Brighton, then the favourite port for embarkation. There was the familiar churn-shaped Eagle, ready to plod her steady course across and back again—much what an old coach would be to our railway carriage. It was a fine cheerful day. There were pleasant families going across, about to stop for the night merely, among the détenus at the French port, going on in the morning to Paris,

and thence on the Grand Tour. There were gay daughters, to whom all was new, a "dear papa," delighted himself; their carriage and the courier were on board. These things Mr. West learned from the girls themselves, who were vastly entertained with the lively, good-natured Englishman who was crossing with them, and whom "dear papa" pronounced "as sensible a man as he ever met." For from that grave forehead had passed away all gloom and depression, and the sense of thought and hopelessness, and the look of "being ten years older" which he had so gratuitously taken on himself. The dull, unfashionable grey livery, quite in keeping, had given place to handsome and even fashionable garments. This was no bit of dandyism, but an almost unconsciousness of his old habit and old nature, which made him think that to be well dressed was to be a gentleman, almost as much as behaving with honour, truth, and profound courtesy, and the other virtues. They had "a charming passage," every one saying that the *Eagle* was really a fine boat, and complimenting the captain at dinner on commanding such an admirable craft. These compliments were indeed justly due to the forbearance of the weather, it being a true ladies' day, the *Eagle* being sure to behave in the most outrageous, imbecile, helpless way when there was anything like a heavy sea on. Now came the low-lying flats of the French coast, the theatrical *Phare* glittering in the sun, the two wickerwork piers all white drawing on. Now they were gliding by the great cross, and, turning the bend, the little town and port, the low gay houses, the crowded quays, the English, in full waiting for their prey, in ranks. Now Mr. West's heart began to flutter, and he looked out anxiously as they glided by. Then the ranks began to move, and walk along to keep up with the vessel. He saw the familiar figures, waiting, as usual, with an interest that no repetition could pall; Captain Filby with his stick; Mr. Blacker, with eager eye, prying at the crowd of passengers on the deck, as though he had been expecting a whole colony of friends, and here they were, come at last. He had indeed noted the substantial travelling-carriage, the courier, and the no less substantial family with whom his quick intelligence at once associated it. About them there could be "no mistake;" it was a good investment for attention. "I should be most happy to be of any service to you. I am the secretary to the English chapel here, &c." It was very strange to Mr. West thus returning to the settlement, and for the moment the look of the whole curiously depressed him. The very familiarity, instead of encouraging, made him melancholy. At last his eye suddenly lighted on his sister, cold, but stiff and anxious, looking and gazing wistfully at the deck.

All were now coming ashore, and in a moment he was beside her, and had her arm in his. The custom-house officers of the place knew their

own colonists very well, and were always indulgent to them about the formal searching. Mr. West was set free in a moment.

"Margaret, Margaret dearest, I am back with you again. And how have you been? And tell me about yourself. Everything here looks just the same."

And he looked round eagerly. There was a constraint and nervousness in her manner which he did not at first notice.

"Oh yes," she answered; "I have been so lonely without you, Gilbert. And now let us get home. You must be so tired; and we will have dinner at once."

"Tired! Not I, Margery," he said, gaily, still looking about. "I have travelled too much since to be tired. Oh, I have such adventures to tell you. And such plans, Margery. What do you think? I was down at the old place. Does that surprise you? Upon my word, this looks quite festive. Never thought it was such a gay pretty place before!"

"Do come home," she said, impatiently. "Surely you have seen all this over and over again. I want to hear everything. Do come!"

He looked at her with a little astonishment. "My dear Margery," he was beginning, when an impatient exclamation broke from her lips, and he felt her hand beat on his arm. He looked up, and there before him was the soft face that for all these weeks had been present to him, that had figured in all the little reverie dramas which had been playing before him morning and evening, and sometimes in dreams at night.

Dreams, indeed! Why did he not go forward to meet her, but stop thus irresolutely? She did not see him—was certainly not thinking of him at that moment, for her hand was on the arm of a tall handsome man, that looked some ten years younger than Mr. West. And her face was looking up at the handsome Spanish face—looking into the dark interesting eyes with an absorbed overpouring gaze. She was seeing, hearing, him alone. For a certain instinct, that tells us a whole history in one flash, there is neither time nor space; and in that one second Mr. West seemed to read a long story, with all its details, which the reader may have guessed long ago.

The surprise and then the shock overpowered him. Now she saw him. With a start and a rush of colour to her cheek she stopped also; then put out her hand, with "Ah! Mr. West! Returned to us!" He bowed, and said, "Yes; I have come." Two of the usual unmeaning speeches, for which neither was certainly accountable in such moments of doubt and agitation. The few sentences that followed may be imagined.

"We were expecting you so long. We were wondering what had become of you—"

He was still looking with the same surprise, and had not yet collected himself. Now Mr. Daeres had come up. There was a constraint in his manner.

"Hallo, West, come back at last! 'Pon

my word, we were wondering, I can tell you. We thought you had given us the slip, my dear friend. If you had not left Miss Margaret behind to answer inquiries, I don't know what odd stories would have been set afloat. What no earth have you been doing?"

Dacres repeated this question in a half-bantering, half-insolent manner, that on another occasion might have seemed to Mr. West a little offensive. He heard only the last words. He was now recovering, and answered mechanically:

"I had some business—some private business."

The young girl looked at him reproachfully, and then said suddenly:

"You know Colonel Vivian? Of course you heard of the wreck? No, you had gone away." And then she introduced them.

"Oh!" Dacres went on, "here's old Blacker flourishing up. See what he'll say. I wish you heard his private opinion. You may be sure the story lost nothing in *his* hands. And I tell you what I think you forgot to bring over with you, my dear boy," continued Mr. Dacres, in his most offensive familiarity—"that little article known to mankind as the tongue. Ha, ha!"

"I think we had better go home, Gilbert dear," said his sister, anxiously. "You must be tired—and there is the luggage."

"Yes," he said, abruptly, "I am tired. Let us go."

Brother and sister both turned away hurriedly.

"Was that Dacres?" said Mr. Blacker, pushing hurriedly by. He had secured possession of the new family.

Mr. West did not speak for a few moments. He then said, a little wildly:

"What is this? What does all this mean?"

"Oh, my poor Gilbert," said his sister, with quite a tone of agony in her voice, "you must prepare yourself for a trial; for they say *she is to be married to him.*"

HISTORY OF A SACK OF CORN.

SECOND CHAPTER.

THE tender shoots of the young wheat are beginning to appear through the half-frozen ground; and the long dismal eight months of a Russian winter are drawing to a fitful and boisterous close. Tall trees are blown down in scores by the tempestuous March winds; great floods are out; and wandering peasants or poor travellers get lost in quagmires, and never heard of more. The dull-eyed, stolid women of the hamlets on the steppe begin to come out of the smoky holes and caves in which they have passed the cold season between listlessness and drink. The snow upon the cabin roofs, which helped to keep out the winter storm, is beginning slowly to melt and trickle down on the kirpitch floor, to the surprise of the myriad tribes of insects and vermin

who have harboured there since last summer. The short sharp hailstorm pelts pitilessly upon ill-fed, feeble children, huddled in heaps near the stove, which serves for bed, kitchen, and comfort; and the partially melted hailstones form in half-frozen pools in every hole about the hut. Drunken and brutalised boors are seen sleeping stupified in the streets, instead of hiding themselves in earth-holes and stables, to avoid being frozen to death;—then, with the first signs of approaching spring, my princely friend, Dooyoumalsky, perceives that there is another stroke of work to be done in his line of business. He has got advances upon his corn at Yassy and at Nicolaiev. He has sold it altogether, the whole crop, to Mr. John Anderson, a year ago, at Odessa. The prince smiles in a peculiar way as he looks at the name of the north-country gentleman, signed in a slow precise hand, on the formal and binding agreement which concluded this happy transaction.

Mr. John Anderson is a brisk confident young Scotchman, who went down from Constantinople especially to buy my prince's corn; and who has been thinking of his great bargain ever since. The brisk young Scotchman is so delighted with his splendid acquaintance, and the enormous profit he expects upon commercial dealings with him, that he has written to his correspondent, a cautious old uncle residing at Glasgow, to the effect that he has opened up a new trade which must enrich them in a few years; and that he naturally expects to obtain a partnership as the well-earned reward of his business-like intelligence. His mother has been gladdened with news even still sweeter, and has had her heart startled back into fresh life by the lavish promises which the Russian magnate has made to her son. The prince, her boy writes, has even gone so far as to hint that his highness has a princely relative of the female sex, who has seen the Scotchman coming up the staircase of the French hotel on the day he bought the corn; and the dounce laddie has been encouraged to believe it not wholly impossible that the new alliance between the respectable family of Anderson and the stately line of Dooyoumalsky may be some day cemented by warmer and closer ties than those of commerce. John does not say any more; he is too manly and modest. But it transpires many years afterwards, partly over an extra glass of toddy, and more immediately and fully from a story told with much humour by the prince, that a great deal more was said to him. Dooyoumalsky is still fond of relating, amidst shrieks of club laughter, that, having spent the fortune of an aunt of his, this mature princess determined to follow him day and night, and never to lose sight of him till she got some of it back again. He had been already set upon for six weeks by the resolute lady, when the stars decreed that he should meet with a protector.

"*Monsieur Andairson,*" the prince always declares with delightful good nature, "was one

young mann of a candour and simplicity to be adored! Adored, I do assure you! It is rare to meet so a young mann! Fresh, ardent, yet wise, oh so wise, he tell me on to manage my lands, an oder wonderfool tings! Well, dis young mann I tell my aunt to be one Scottish lord, and moch in loff with her; she see the young mann on a stair, call him 'My lord,' and by-and-by she go to Stamboul after him. Figure to you then, I pray, what affair I have with that aunt and her four husbands at Bucharest when I go there, and she find out Monsieur Andairson agent for corn-broker! Pity me, I pray you;" and so on, as long as it is pleasant to talk or listen.

It is thus clear that there is no field at present open to a genius of the prince's calibre in the local Russian markets. But he is always too well informed for that to prove a difficulty; and at the critical moment one of the Cossack generals in command on the Danubian frontier who has been long looking out for an occasion of speculating with Dooyoumalsky, writes to him to say that a British bank has just been opened at Galatz for the purpose of making advances on grain; and also that an Irish gentleman from Belfast has been making inquiries which lead to the belief that he intends to establish a branch house at Ibraila. He is a hopeful Irish gentleman, formerly a Crimean major of dragoons. He has a brother who is a thriving manufacturer at Belfast, and so he has sold out of a crack regiment to join him. The worthy fraternity have asked themselves whether some very cautiously conducted exchanges of Hibernian linen and Moldo-Wallachian corn might not be arranged in a manner advantageous to all parties. The major, who is a fine, genial, honest gentleman, by no means wanting in brains, has suggested this idea. Returning home from the siege of Sebastopol, he became enslaved by the charms of a boyard's widow, and has now hastened back to urge his suit and his fortunes together. So it appears that the Cossack general's information, allowing for a little exaggeration (no Russian could tell news without that), is substantially correct.

Before the bank has paid a single acceptance, before the Irish major has even thought of taking lodgings, Dooyoumalsky is with them. His diplomacy is perfect. No love-tricks with elderly aunts upon the square-toed, solid-looking banker. My prince has got his photograph, and knows that this little game would not do. The banker is too plump in the waist, too bald on the pate, and there is a stern keen look under those bushy eyebrows that warns my prince off that ground. Dooyoumalsky knows that the banker is not a man to be trifled with or tricked under ordinary circumstances, as well as if he had lived with him twenty years. My prince is aware that he is more difficult to be caught than the shyest trout in a Tyrolean brook; but he has caught trouts even there in his young days, and so sure as that banker's name is William Heavy-

side, my prince will catch and land him likewise. Indeed, Dooyoumalsky has long had an eye upon him. He was at the Isle of Wight last autumn just when it so happened that Mr. Heavyside was there also. He had come for his health after twenty years' prosperous trading among the wily Chinamen. My prince had frequently heard the wealth and integrity of the banker extolled by the happy islanders of Cowes and Shanklin. It was affirmed, moreover, that the merchants of Pekin had presented him with a farewell testimonial, and publicly expressed their regret that his health prevented him from remaining with them.

My prince carefully marked all this down for future use, and is heartily glad to see that Mr. Heavyside, tired of inactivity, has resolved to try the corn countries before he settles to repose and brings out his daughters as a county magistrate in England. Dooyoumalsky, indeed, finds it a very good speculation to appear from time to time in the British Islands. Our court journals, court circulars, and fashionable intelligence writers are so fond of talking about foreign princes, and calling them highnesses all round indiscriminately, that my prince and many of his brethren find it a profitable advertisement to go to Britain. A week at a fashionable hotel, and a paragraph adroitly inserted in an evening paper, quite brush up a nobleman's tarnished reputation in Russia, and make it shine again. It has been known, over and over again, to transform an arrant cheat into an oppressed patriot of the loftiest dimensions; but, upon the whole, I am inclined to think that it succeeds oftenest and best as a pure trade venture. The British money market may be always wooed with success by a smart foreigner who is impudent, loud, and unscrupulous enough to court it properly.

For some days previous to the prince's arrival at Galatz, telegrams come pouring in from the uttermost ends of the earth. Dooyoumalsky is no common traveller, and he spends enough on telegrams in a month to keep him honestly for two, if he cared to live cleanly. Thus the banker, one day, going to dine at the hotel, because his own cook is drunk and absent, finds a magnificent apparition in the doorway. This is a Circassian chief, in the full uniform or costume of his country. He is a tall man, of remarkable grace and personal beauty. He looks, and he is, as brave as a lion. He is a perfect model of glorious health and strength in its most perfect development. His gay silken clothes blaze with silver; his gorgeous arms and his belt are encrusted with gems. There is quite a crowd round him, and several persons whom the banker has heard are warm men. Near him stands a fair-haired, blue-eyed young man, with delicately pencilled moustachios. He is evidently dressed by Mr. Poole in the height of fashion. His white beringed hands are full of unopened telegrams and letters with large official seals. About the inn-yard are several flushed and heated Tartar couriers who have just spurred in; and a shaggy

Cossack horseman sitting motionless with a long, tall, slender spear pointed upwards.

In answer to some inquiries, which it is not easy to get answered in the general excitement, the banker at last learns, from an apparently awe-stricken but communicative corn-broker's tout, who has just lounged in, and whom he has had occasion sometimes to employ, that the great Russian aide-de-camp-general, his Highness the Prince Vassili Ivanovitch Dooyoumalsky's coming has been telegraphed from St. Petersburg. The Hospodar has ordered the local authorities to receive him in state, and messages are arriving from various crowned heads every hour. That shaggy Cossack, with the spear, is waiting to convey immediate news of his highness's arrival to the head-quarters of the Russian army of observation now on the neighbouring frontier. The coming of this great man is supposed to have reference to recent political events in Austria and Hungary. So far the communicative broker's tout. His local name is "Courtier de Commerce," or Courtier of Trade. He buys nothing, he sells nothing himself; but he belongs to a very large class in Eastern Europe. He is a word-monger, and finds it a very good business.

As he still speaks, a wild yelling is heard in the distance, and a clump of straggling spears are seen just pointing above a neighbouring hillock. On they come, and after them a post-cart, with six horses at a headlong gallop, the postboys screaming like devils; and in rushes the prince's avant-courier. Amidst smoke, steam, mud, and hurry, this important personage jumps down from his straw perch, and announces the immediate coming of his highness. The local authorities flock hastily down, adjusting their sword-belts and uniforms; a military band forms before the hotel; troops line the street; and there they wait, hour after hour, till, towards dusk, the outriders of the main escort are signalled, and almost hidden by a cloud of spears, three tall travelling britzkas, with ten straggling ponies harnessed to each of them, are seen approaching rapidly. The first contains the prince's cook, the second his highness in person, and the third his secretary. The military band bursts into a deafening welcome as they roll into the inn-yard; and his highness, descending with the aid of two lackeys, makes his way into the chief room of the inn, where the town authorities and local magnates are assembled to receive him. He is in the splendid full uniform of a Russian general, covered with stars and crosses; it being the invariable custom for great men to travel in these countries so arrayed.

As the first screaming notes of the band strike up, the Cossack horseman lowers his spear. He raises his head stiffly, and the wiry little horse raises his tail in like manner, and away they go like a flash of lightning for the frontier, where they will bring the glad tidings that the first move in a new corn swindle is about to begin.

Late on the same night, just as the British

banker is thinking of bed, and when his confidential clerk, who has passed the evening with him, has gone home, he hears a soft continued knocking at his back door. Soon afterwards his principal servant comes in with a mysterious air. That servant is his chief butler, always a prominent personage, and the prime minister of every Oriental household. The banker has discovered quite a treasure of a chief butler in a Polish exiled count of the handiest character, who puts his nobility in his pocket quite out of the way, and is valet, housemaid, and often cook altogether, and always cheerfully. The banker, who does not know much of local market prices, thinks he was never better served in his life, and wonders how other people can complain of their domestic comforts in these easy-going places. Consequently, a very kindly and a pleasant feeling has sprung up in the Briton's heart towards his chief butler, and he means to lift up his head by-and-by, when time and occasion serve. The Polish nobleman seems to guess something of this, and with devoted attention and touching good taste, humbly conveys to him hints that he has found several times beyond price in his business. Upon the present occasion the Polish nobleman appears big with some tremendous idea. When mildly interrogated, he affirms that a poor but honest person of his acquaintance desires admittance on pressing business, of which he (the Polish nobleman) can only fancy the nature. He appears in an ecstasy of subdued joy as he makes that announcement. He has the generous and happy look of a man announcing good tidings of almost incredible fortune, in which he has no other concern than the rejoicing of a grateful heart over the coming pleasure of those it loves. Mr. Heavyside is infinitely softened, and bids him admit the poor but honest man at once. He does so, and it appears that he is the shabby talkative courtier of the inn-yard.

He has come to say that he has a marvellous bargain to propose. He has seen the prince's secretary, the fair young man whose hands were full of telegrams. Mr. Heavyside nods his remembrance of the secretary. Well, the poor but honest person has seen the secretary; that is, he watched for him till he had left the great man and was going to bed. It was impossible to get at him while with the prince, for the Circassian chief lies down on a carpet spread outside my prince's door, and would defend the entrance with his life. But the poor honest person has wits, and knowing that a great English banker (Mr. Heavyside winces) is established at Galatz, he saw that business might be done, and he has done it. He has ascertained that the prince has got sixty thousand acres of standing wheat in Bessarabia, just within a day's journey; and if a proper bribe is given to the secretary, perhaps the prince may be induced to sell it before any of the Greek or Italian dealers get at him. His highness is only going to stop a few hours, and his horses are ordered on to Bucharest at day-

break. Still something can be done: those Russians are such grand impetuous fellows; it is only needful to know how to manage them to do what you like. There is always some one near them who can turn them round one finger, and who will take a small bribe for a great service.

Perhaps Mr. Heavyside's English sense of right and wrong revolts at this idea of bribing a man's trusted servant to betray him. If so, he is requested to leave that part of the transaction to the poor but honest person. He need know nothing about it. Indeed, he is assured that as all Russians take bribes, and every employer is aware of the fact, they merely form a part of the legitimate and recognised perquisites of place. They are the commission elsewhere paid openly upon sales. The banker will find all these arguments perfectly familiar to his shabby visitor. Perhaps he still dislikes the whole affair, and feels doubtful about it, but he is ultimately put off his guard. The poor but honest person will cheerfully admit that the Moldo-Wallachian boyards are not to be trusted; but a Russian prince, a Dooyoumalsky, ah! The honest man clacks his thumb-nail against his teeth, to signify by that expressive pantomime how profound are his convictions as to the integrity and chivalrous nature of that lofty and immaculate class. The Polish nobleman here steps in. He has a national and deep hatred to all Russians. He contemptuously assures his master that Dooyoumalsky, when in command at Wilna, ordered the Polish nobleman's mother and seven lovely sisters to be all scourged to death; that nineteen other illustrious and lovely persons of his family were simultaneously shot, and their immense estates confiscated. Yet still this bloodthirsty miscreant is rich. The money he wrung out of tortured and prostrate Poland would make him rich; and, besides, there is the corn: they can go and see it. Mr. Heavyside has never been in the interior; suppose they go to-morrow. The Polish nobleman will make all the arrangements. A note to Mr. Ledger, the chief clerk, is all that will be necessary, and they may be back in three days. There is some excellent bustard-shooting on the road, and, perhaps, if they are fortunate, they may buy some valuable fox and wolf skins for winter pelisses. So here is a tempting health-giving sort of business started up full grown in the middle of a single night.

Perhaps the banker yields to these arguments. The proposed profits are enormous; no money will be wanted till the crops are shipped and insured. All this has been clearly explained to him. Beside, like most Englishmen, he has a spice of adventure and love of travel in him, or he would not be trying to gather nuggets on the banks of the Danube at his time of life.

Sure enough, then, the next day away they go, at daybreak, long before Mr. Ledger is stirring. There is no business that Mr. Ledger cannot do while his chief is away, and perhaps

it might be better for the business if his chief did not come back again, seeing that Mr. Ledger has grown grey in the country, and married a wife there, and that he knows already much of the grievous experience his employer will hereafter acquire. Little does Mr. Heavyside think, as he speeds pleasantly through the morning air, with four gay little ponies drawing a light caleche at twelve miles an hour over the steppe, how patiently he has been fished for, and how cleverly he has been caught. From time to time on the road he will meet shaggy, unkempt, loose-limbed peasant-boys on rough steppe galloways, without bridle or saddle, but always riding furiously. Those lads are messengers, going to and fro between the prince and his wife. She is a stout, inert, witless sort of lady, but she will be found quite prepared for Mr. Heavyside. Boys and ponies cost nothing in these countries, and she is sure to be well provided with instructions.

Mr. Ledger, as he walks down to his office, by-and-by, may also note the tall towering figure of the Circassian standing upon the house-top over his master's bedroom at the hotel. He is shading his eyes, naturally wonderfully clear and keen, with his hand, in order that he may see distinctly as far as possible. He is watching the road taken by the banker, and immediately the light caleche is quite out of sight, and he has observed that one of the pony messengers has got a wide start of it by a short cut through some woods on the right, he stalks down with a stately stride to report progress to my prince. That great boyard then pats the brave, sharp-eyed fellow on the head, like the faithful favourite sort of mastiff that he is; and my prince having flirted, according to his kind, with a travelling French actress staying at the hotel, smokes a few cigarettes with some local grandees who wait upon him, steps again into his smart travelling-carriage, and is off to have a little talk with the Irish major from Belfast, presently staying at Ibraïla.

AN OUT-OF-THE-WAY CORNER.

WHY I have taken it into my head to seek an Out-of-the-way Corner in the country for a temporary respite from London life, is, I fancy, nobody's particular business. It may have been to relax from burdensome duties, or to complete an epic poem, or to write a tragedy, or to solve a geometrical problem, or to perfect a piece of mechanism, or it may have been to do anything else; what is that to anybody? I sought retirement for a while, and found the prettiest, the most rural, and the quietest little nook in the beautiful county of Starshire, only a few miles from the metropolis, and not far from a branch railway station. Away from noise and hurry, here I have pitched my tent; in more business-like words, here I have hired a small cottage of three rooms. My landlord lives in an attached cot of two rooms, so curiously annexed by an

exceedingly skilful village architect that I think he would be likely to succeed in any great competition for public building, such, for example, as the Houses of Parliament, or the New Law Courts. He is a genius in his way. What his peculiar style is, it would be difficult to pronounce, though from the variety of his specimens I cannot help agreeing with the general opinion hereabout, that if he had been dead and buried in time, he and his architecture would have deserved an extra stanza in Gray's *Elegy*. But this his lot forbade.

Not e'en these bones from insult to protect,
Will frail memorial be erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture decked,
To implore the passing tribute of a sigh.

He is what is called a character; and it is remarkable how many characters I have met with in this limited compass in a very short space of time.

To begin with my landlord. He was a butcher, and has withdrawn himself from the fatigues of the Borough-market on a limited competency. In person he is as square and stout as master-butchers ought to be; but his squareness in front is not now as rotundly firm as it used to be when he was in full occupation. His countenance is rather placid than expressive, and so meek, that one would swear he had never slaughtered any animal in all his life; though it is said he was brought up to the trade, and—when a mere child—was coaxed by his father to be a good boy, with the promise that if he were, he should have a lamb to kill by himself. But be that as it may, he is now a very mild and reputable man of somewhat over fifty years of age; and has one female servant to minister to his wants. They must have been rather driven into a corner by letting the roomier part of the small cottage to me. But Anne has since married the butcher, and taken the honoured and appropriate title of Mrs. Stillwell. Mr. Stillwell is a capital shot—a perfect Robin Hood for hitting anything he aims at. He has one friend and inseparable companion, who is his superior even in this accomplishment. His name is Mills. He is a little fellow. He has the sharp look of a ferret; and altogether, when scanned physiologically, suggests the idea of a weasel, or other thorough vermin, in human metamorphosis. In a locality of game-preserving, I should consider him competent for the most audacious risks and surest success. But there are no preserves near our corner, and the two friends simply stroll about to bag what comes across them in the sporting line, be it fish, bird, or quadruped. It could not be called poaching or trespassing, for Mills withal is a sober, peaceful, well-mannered fellow, and, when recounting his exploits, rather entertaining. There was no show of predetermined destruction of game, as at battues, for the two friends have only one ostensible gun between them, to take shot turn-about; but the butcher, besides a pouch like a wallet, has a long pocket, and in that pocket a long tube, and, when they walk

forth for an airing, that tube goes with them for an airing too. My belief was, and is, that, loaded with a pellet the size of a marrowfat pea, it never misses. The nose of a perch, the head of a dabchick, the leg of a rabbit, all one. The owners came one and all into the pot pourri; and the friends frequently make very savoury refectations, recalling to mind a chef-d'œuvre of Ude, Soyer, or Francatelli. Not to tell that there is occasionally a hare in the stew, or a leveret, or a wild duck in winter, or a few pigeons (wild of course), and that once a covey of thirteen partridges having been surreptitiously hatched in a gentleman's garden about a mile off, the birds were so abandoned that they *would* stray out of their proper bounds, and provoke Mills to bring a brace home, "accidentally," until not one was left. They are open to snipes, fieldfares, and plovers likewise, and I have heard of an owl; but Mills assures me flatly that he shot it on commission, for stuffing as a specimen.

Until I came here, I had lived all my days in town. In chambers I only knew the names of my neighbours from their being painted on the board of the other in-dwellers on my staircase. In the street where I sojourned a long time I was not aware who were my next-door respectable ratepayers; and, on the opposite side, the extent of my intelligence related to several young ladies who read diligently at the windows, and sometimes looked off their books. But I knew nothing, and cared nothing, about any one being among the whole miscellaneous lot. How or why I have come to take so much interest in my new rustic associates, as to know all about them, I can scarcely say, unless it is that we all watch one another.

The Dark-mouth Arms is the inn of the hamlet. The Dark-mouth Arms, so grandly named after a noble earl who is lord of the surrounding manor, and illustrated by a heraldic signboard flamingly blazoned, is also a beer-shop, and the tenancy is held by one Job Crawley, a remarkably strong-built and athletic man, somewhat over the middle age. Job was once what we used to style a bruiser, but what is called, in later and more refined language, a pugilist, or prize-fighter. He, Pilgrim-of-Progress-like, fought many a good fight, until he became tempted to withdraw from the ring which he adorned, to put another ring on the fat finger of the landlady of "the Dark-mouth."

Sure such a pair were never seen

So justly formed to pair by nature;

for, potential as Job looks, he cannot compete with his wife, who is the largest lady of colour I ever saw, and yet I once had the honour of an interview, for which I paid half-a-crown, with the Hottentot Venus. She has a face broad and round as the moon (eclipsed, to be sure), but illuminated with such splendour of white teeth as the proudest duchess in the land might envy, or as the greatest living dentist might try to emulate in vain. She

is handsome, of pleasing expression, and a model of perfect cleanliness in household and person. A friend of mine, who derives the name of the Dark-mouth Arms from the landlady, considers Job fortunate in his transition from the black eyes of the old ring to the black eyes of the new. Job is mild-tempered, and, when not offended or drunk, keeps the peace like a constable off duty, or a policeman in a gentleman's kitchen. Mrs. Crawley being of a similar disposition, under similar conditions, but not otherwise, it cannot be asserted that their matrimonial felicity is unruffled. On the contrary, violent storms occur, and Job will occasionally be provoked to knock his darling down; and she to lay his head open by the adroitly directed fling of a quart pot or decanter. Yet they really love one another after their fashion. Let any one lay a rude touch on either, in presence of the other, and try!

The next cottage to me is a like small domicile, with a like small garden (perhaps thirty paces by fifteen), the occupant of which was seldom visible when I came into the Out-of-the-way Corner. During the year, he came down, now and then, to look at something in some neatish sheds or out-houses, and to sleep, and go away. I was informed by Mr. Stillwell, when I hired my cottage, that his name was Codling, and that he was officially and respectably connected with the Corporation of London. This was true, but yet Mr. Codling was a mysterious personage until the spring season commenced and brought him out. Then there was bustle and preparation in the Codling halls. A handsome tent was erected in the garden, and ranges of symmetrical steps or benches were laid down, and speedily covered with flower-pots of many a varying size. I now discovered that my neighbour was a tulip-fancier, and that in that pretty piece of ground (not as spacious as a moderate, middle-class drawing-room) he was bringing to perfection the annual result of his competitive skill and unwearied attention. The canvas was shifted up and down, according to the weather, and I laughed at the glimpses I got of the budding flowers, and the extraordinarily minute pains bestowed upon them. We, on our side of Mr. Codling, were courteously requested not to burn any weeds; and Messrs. Stillwell and Mills were entreated not to smoke a pipe, nor I a cigar, when the wind blew south-east, south, south-west, or west: because the deteriorating odour would be wafted to the tulips, and it would be injurious to them to close the tent in that direction. In due time I was invited to the annual show, and met a large party, including amateur florists from several parts of the Continent. Mr. Codling gave a City-like lunch, and pointed out to me the first prize, for which he had received three hundred guineas from one of his guests. I acknowledged it to be very pretty, but thought some specimen as low as ten or five guineas quite as beautiful. The company looked upon me with sovereign con-

tempt, and I took an early opportunity to steal away.

Steal away; all very well to say so; but we are situated on the heaviest and stiffest loam in England, and rapid locomotion is often an extreme difficulty with us. The doctor prescribed daily walking exercise to an invalid neighbour, and though he stuck to it, he withered and died in two of the sweet, moist spring months, on the soil so favourable to tulips.

Mr. MacTweedy is a gardener living on the top of the gently sloping hill, with a small extent of ground, and two or three insignificant glass houses. But these same glass houses are a fortune, maintaining him in respectable competency; he is always to be found, with his staff of two or three, labouring to a nicety in the cultivation of his produce. Strawberries, so premature as to sell for a guinea the thumb-pottle in Covent-garden market (about a shilling and ninepence per strawberry), are the foremost and first-fruits of his skill, and they are followed by other delicacies, so much out of season as to bring very high prices. Adjacent is Thomson, another and more general gardener, with larger premises: of whom all I know is, that, when going to leave the Out-of-the-way Corner for a few weeks, I asked him to keep my half-dozen fancy fowls, and he did. They strayed; but Mills told me he had never seen a Dorking anywhere about.

I am afraid I must confess to a sneaking friendship for Mills. Certainly I cannot rate him as a sportsman of the highest order, though I am sure that, if he had possessed the means to rent a manor in the Highlands of Scotland, his deeds would have put to shame those pro tempore autocrats whose purses carry further and better than their guns. I was acquainted with one of these, who never sent me a feather, but who told me he had shot three seasons (he never shot anything else), and that a ptarmigan was a species of cock-of-the-wood or turkey. Besides, Mr. Mills is always in the way: not in the sense of obstruction, but of usefulness and helping hand. In all his dealings with his fellow-creatures, too, he is as honest as he is obliging; and, to see him glorified under the grand shining dark disc of Mrs. Crawley at the Dark-mouth Arms, when he has deserved her countenance, is a spectacle not to be effaced from the mind of the picturesque-loving beholder. But he has other qualities or accomplishments of which it behoves me to speak. He has improved his vocal organs beyond belief. There is not a bird in the air, or a beast on the earth, or, I had almost said a fish in the water (dumb as they are asserted to be), or an insect, anywhere, whose voice he cannot imitate to perfection. As a hen gathers her chickens, so can Mills, at eve, call a covey to his feet. He can chirp birds from the trees, and bring hares (not rabbits) to stop and listen. One sunny evening, on a sunny hedgerow bank, he asked me if I would like to look at a weasel? On my answering in the affirmative, he uttered a curious

noise, upon which the animal peeped out of a hole, and, in half a moment, the air-gun brought down the quarry.

A WORKHOUSE PROBE.

A COAL-CELLAR without coals; a punishment-cell for refractory criminals; a dreary black-hole, with grated windows, and cold damp floor and walls; a tank with the water let off, and the oldest fish-inhabitant departed—such is the Hampshire casual ward we are visiting to-day. It is very small. Its sole furniture is one bedstead, without clothes or wraps; and, though we are assured that a fire is lighted in it "sometimes," there is no evidence of any such genial contingency now. Its massive door is plentifully studded with the heavy iron nails which adorn the entrances to her Majesty's jails, and are supposed to strike terror into the hearts of evil-doers; and it is altogether as cold, comfortable, and penal a resting-place as the sternest disciplinarian could wish. If it does not do duty as village lock-up, the local authorities are extravagant; for a fitter place in which any obstreperously convivial Gileos or Rogers might shake off the hilarity of a Saturday night's carouse, and might become penitent, meek, and subdued, it would be hard to find. You step down into it direct from the road without intervening hall or corridor, and the approach to its one door is graced by a stagnant pool, the fetid smell from which offends the least sensitive nose. "We're not much troubled with tramps here, gentlemen; they prefer going on to the town, four miles off," remarks the matron, with a smile. As we look down shudderingly, this wet and foggy autumn day, into the damp dark place, and fancy the key turned and ourselves locked in till morning, we fully appreciate the preference shown. Any sensible wayfarer, however footsore, hungry, and exhausted, would struggle on for another four miles to avoid spending the night in a dungeon, compared to which a police-cell is comfort, and a model prison luxury.

"No admittance to the workhouse, except on business, by order of the guardians," does not apply to us. Our open sesame is the inquiry we have on hand; for "we" are the Lancet Commission, which your servant, the present writer, has been permitted to accompany on its errand of humanity, and admission is cheerfully accorded, apparently by instinct, certainly without a question as to our credentials. A snug, cozy little union of four parishes, managed by a board, the chairman of which is the squire of the neighbourhood, with for a vice-chairman the squire's namesake and near relative; a union in which the workhouse is rented by the board of managers from the presiding member of that board (!)—a union where the clergyman of the parish is paid an annual sum, not for holding regular service as chaplain, but for occasionally visiting the twenty-one paupers now in the house; a little place where "wards" are cottage-rooms, and where the master and matron

are collectively chief nurse, governor, superintendent, labour-master, mistress, and head-cook. Matters which would be abuses on a large scale are part of a system here, under which paupers are, perhaps, better cared for than in many an establishment whose pretensions are fourfold.

The "workhouse" consists of twelve little cottages, forming an enclosed quadrangle, in which there is practically no classification, and where some of the sanitary arrangements are as bad as ignorance and old-fashioned prejudice can make them. A cesspool which has "not been cleared out in the twelve years we've been here," lies under the windows of the lying-in and infectious wards; and the closets, which have been "inspected" twice a year, with great regularity, by the representative of the Poor Law Board, are as disgustingly unfit for human use as if they belonged to some savage kraal, where the commonest laws of decency and health were unknown. But in many of the inner domestic details in which kind and thoughtful interest makes people happy, the twenty-one men and women were well placed. You see it in the bright alacrity of the matron, in the cheerful readiness of her replies, in the snugness of some of the internal arrangements, and in the cleanliness and contentment of the small handful of paupers at home. The entrance to the master's house—which is simply one of the cottages furnished up and snugly furnished—is opposite the door of the dungeon in which tramps pay the penalty of their calling. The master is at church, but his wife will show us over the workhouse with the greatest pleasure. There is no pause, nor evasion, nor holding back; and, in two minutes from the time of our ringing the bell, we have passed through the private apartments, and are on the female side of the central yard. Such a little place to be a union workhouse! After a long experience of workhouses like towns, of long and dreary chambers in which a short-sighted person could easily mistake his own father if placed at the opposite end to himself, Mr. Wemmick's Walworth fortress, with its Lilliputian drawbridge, moat, and guarded postern, irresistibly occur to us as we are shown over "wards" not much larger than bathing-machines, and "refectories" and "day-rooms" which would be undersized for a family of six. There is no communication through what we suppose we must call the house. The cottages are—save here and there, where two bedrooms have been thrown into one—almost as distinct as in the pre-New Poor Law period when they were built. Hearing with pleasure that the child-inmates are sent to the ordinary parish school, and not educated like pariahs apart, we pass into the first cottage on the women's side.

A little room, with what seemed to be the ear of a balloon in wicker-work standing in one corner, and one small tin basin—of the size of the vessels in which "half portions" of soup are served at a club—filled with soap-suds, is shown us as the lavatory. On remarking that the latter article looked, if anything, a trifle small to be

the washing vessel of the establishment, we were told of increased accommodation looming in the future; and that upon a board or sub-committee making up its mind and presenting a report, a larger basin and a more copious supply of towels would be granted. The balloon-car turns out to be a cradle, unoccupied at present, but in which four pauper babies can be rocked at once, two at each end—a comprehensive provision if the total population of the workhouse, twenty-one, all decrepid or disabled, be considered. Two women, one weak-minded and the other subject to fits, a child, and a bedridden old man, are the only inmates at home. The other paupers—including a couple of idiots and a young man of suicidal tendencies—are with the master at church, for a great anniversary festival is being held, and the little knot of male worshippers, in clean white smock-frocks, seated to the right of the middle aisle, and the handful of poor women opposite them, are the workhouse's contribution to the celebration of the day. The child smiles upon us, and gazes up wonderingly, with grave black eyes, in which, by the way, there is not a trace of fear, as the matron precedes us into the room. It is another cottage apartment, with the two women just spoken of busily at work. They are all scrupulously clean, despite the size of the tin cup just hinted at; and here, as elsewhere, during our visit, we are disposed to declare the little place to be exceptional, and not to be judged by the rules it is essential to enforce in other establishments of its class. That it should, in spite of some grave defects, rise superior to circumstances, is doubtless due to the character and disposition of its governing board and their two delegates, the master and matron. The latter is as cheery and kind as a warm heart and good disposition could make her. The pauper child's smile of recognition and welcome, and the way her little hand closed familiarly upon our guide's gown, spoke volumes as to habitual kindnesses; while the demeanour of the two women—familiar and confident; though not wanting in respect—was a testimonial infinitely more convincing than a whole wilderness of votes of thanks and minutes of approval. After a question from one of the women on a point of household discipline has been answered, and the little girl's whispered petition smilingly granted, we pass to the kitchen, where boiled bacon, cabbages, and some added condiment, giving a deliciously appetising flavour, are swimming in the coppers we are invited to peer into. A most savoury and toothsome mixture it seems to be, and our railway journey from London, and moist drive subsequently from Barchester, has left us hungry enough to envy the paupers for whom it is preparing.

More cottage apartments, the down-stair rooms, with flooring of stone or brick; those up-stairs holding three or four beds, all well appointed, and each cottage containing two rooms. Chairs or benches, a rough table, and

a cupboard used in common by the occupants, comprise the furniture. After traversing the yard, and going over every room of every cottage—finding, of course, a wonderful uniformity throughout—we come to the one bedridden old man. A room has been fitted up for him on the ground floor, and here he is lying cozily enough, but quite alone, with his feet to the door, and his limbs and body stretched out in an attitude which suggests rather painfully the time when lameness, and old age, and poverty will be over, and when he will be carried from his present resting-place for ever. Not that there was anything in the man himself, as distinguished from his attitude, to suggest aught but the keenest appreciation of life; for he started up in bed and bobbed his head to the Commission, as if he guessed the purport of the visit, and had been waiting these thirteen years to speak his autobiography. He was a hale, ruddy, vigorous old fellow, who had lost an eye, but whose voice showed no sign of infirmity. Nay, as we had understood before we visited him that he was very deaf, this vigour of voice led to a rather boisterous colloquy between one of our party and himself. "How do you find yourself, my man?" inquired our friend, in tones adapted to a patient whose infirmity aural surgeons had failed to relieve. "Noicely, thankee, zur, but oise lame, you know, oise lame!" shouted back the invalid, in accents fitted for the quarter-deck of a battle-ship in the heat of action; and so the conversation went on, each sorry for the other's deafness, and politely anxious to accommodate himself to it. For the old pauper was not satisfied with emulating the bellow of an exceptionally strong-lunged bull. He made a speaking-trumpet of his wrinkled hands; and, taking steady aim at his visitor's ear, repeated every assertion twice. "Yes, oi'm well enough;" then more slowly, "Oi'm well enough" (pause), "bar the lameness—bar the lameness." He had been at full pitch for some minutes now, and though red in the face could still have cleared the busiest thoroughfare for a fire-engine's progress. "It was Mr. Mullings's horse, it was, yes. It was Mr. Mullings's horse. Kicked me he did! He kicked me, yer know" (louder). "Oi can stand up though" (louder still); "oi can stand up." Then, not quite so loud, but with a slow distinctness of enunciation, meant to give his hearer every chance, "Oi can stand up, but it's walking that bothers me, that bothers me, just here, yer know; just here. Oi'm well enough, and comfortable enough, thankee, zur. Now I don't want for nothing, I dawns't, thankee kindly." A shelf half hidden by a neat curtain held a couple of bottles and a Bible and prayer-book, and a convenient stand at the bed-head served for the veteran's dinner-tray. "I suppose he's very deaf," said his late interlocutor, commiseratingly, as we left him bobbing his head like some huge and bulbous sensitive plant, after his bed-linen and accessories had been examined, and found clean: "I suppose he's very deaf. How old is he?"

"Well, sir, he's eighty-five, and his sight's failing, but his hearing's as good as ever!" This discovery rather weakened the spirit of our cross-examination; but time pressed, and we passed to what was called the old men's day-room. The pseudo deaf man, who, though confined to his bed, looked as hale and strong as any of us, had been a soldier, then a wanderer, then a farm-labourer, but "had never made himself a home," and was locally known as a boisterous Lothario up to the time of his accident "a long time ago, I don't exactly know how long, but he was here when we came in 1855."

A corner cupboard containing an odd volume of a religious work, a soap-dish and shaving-brush, three stale crusts, two small bits of cooked meat, and some odd cups and saucers; a table, a bench, and a Windsor chair with unnaturally long legs, which lifted it from the ground like stilts, and a cottage interior to match the rest, made up the old men's day-room. A pauper, recently deceased, had laboured under a spinal infirmity which compelled him to sit in a certain position, and the chair had been altered by order of the guardians for his benefit. The other inmates, both male and female, are too old and infirm for household work, so a charwoman, and in time of pressure two charwomen, are hired from the village for as many days a week as are necessary to keep the place in order. Everything is on the same cozy scale. The "infectious ward"—it really seems absurd to use these titles when we recal the little place—is the upper room of one of the cottages. It is seldom used. How often? "Oh! perhaps twice or three times a year, perhaps not so much—we had a case of itch here last, but that's five months ago. No, we've never any able-bodied people here, and the others are nearly all of the same class as the old man you've been talking to, who have never made themselves a home. Our guardians relieve out more than in; for if they can help people at their own places, they prefer doing it to breaking up their homes and forcing them into the house. Do I consider it safe to keep two idiots and a young man of suicidal tendencies together, with their medicine bottles within reach to drink from, or ply each other with? Well, it's some months ago since the young man attempted his life last, and he's been a good deal easier in his mind lately. Indeed, sir, if you think the Commissioners of Lunacy ought to know about him, and that he shouldn't be kept here, I'm sure I'll tell the board so, and I dare say they'll have him moved. No, sir, I don't remember that the gentleman from the Poor Law Board ever mentioned this; but you shall see the visiting book directly. May I ask if you're from the *Lancet*, gentlemen? Yes! I thought as much (smiling). Well, I hope you don't find us very bad. I'm sure we try our best, and when there's any one sick I don't think they're badly cared for. I generally nurse myself, and the ladies from the Hall and the clergyman's wife

often come to read to the inmates, and lend them books as well; oh yes, the clergyman visits the workhouse regularly. No, sir, there's no service held here, but the ten pounds a year is paid him for coming, don't you see, and he's very good and kind, I'm sure."

Although we had reason to believe that paupers—always excepting the male casuals, who were evidently housed wretchedly on principle—were properly treated in the main, the arrangement under which the workhouse is hired struck us as peculiar. One regulation of the new Poor Law is, that "all contracts to be entered into on behalf of the Union, relating to the maintenance, clothing, *lodging*, employment, or relief of the poor . . . shall be made and entered into by the guardians;" and, in a note to this clause, we find that "heavy penalties are imposed on persons having the management of the poor"—i.e. the guardians—"if concerned in contracts for the supply of goods,"—"goods," in this sense, obviously referring to lodging as well as maintenance, "for the use of such poor."

This salutary regulation is, it is well known, frequently evaded. The influential ratepayer, who virtually returns a section of the guardians, is a tradesman whose tenders are not often refused; guardians have nephews, or brothers, or wife's relatives, who sell bread, or groceries, or meat, on such disinterested terms, that it is the bounden duty of the parochial board to deal with them; or guardians sell the raw material out of which the goods for contracts are made, and make their vote contingent upon the tradesman buying of them in return. These things are notorious; and the following anecdote fairly illustrates the system. Not many months ago, a contract for painting a metropolitan workhouse was signed; and, in due course, the painter entered upon his work. On the first day a guardian, who is a wholesale dealer in colours, looked in at the workhouse during the dinner-hour, and while the workmen were away, and in his intense regard for the paupers' comfort, asked to see the wards then being restored, that he might judge for himself how the work was performed. The good man then, without passing a word of censure or comment, wrapped up two minute specimens of the paint, put them in his waistcoat-pocket, and walked quietly away, first telling the workhouse-master to let the contractor know of his visit. The next day this guardian and colour-dealer received in answer to his hint an order for the very paints required to carry out the workhouse contract; so that all unpleasant analyses of the quality, or quibbles as to the work, were promptly avoided. Here was no corruption, no touting, no undue influence. What could be more strictly in accordance with a high-minded guardian's sense of duty than that he should devote his special knowledge to the ensuring fit materials for parish work being used? And how could this end be better attained than by examining them for himself? On the other hand, the contractor was merely

anxious to please his customers; and if one of them furnished the paints himself, it was scarcely likely that the board would be dissatisfied; or questions arise as to an inferior description being used, or less work being given; or on the contract generally being performed in a slovenly but inexpensive fashion. The tacit understanding manifested between guardian and contractor was beautifully simple, and in large towns, where parochial boards are mainly composed of small tradesmen, there is no reasonable doubt that similar practices prevail almost universally. But in the agricultural districts, where country gentlemen, magistrates, and their friends serve as guardians, where a patriarchal interest is supposed to be felt in the poor people of the township, or the estate, we expect matters to be managed without taint of jobbery. Yet, in the establishment we are visiting, where we find so much to praise and so comparatively little to blame, the chief guardian lets the workhouse to the rest, and draws his rent from the poor-rates he administers!

It is possible that no very serious wrong ensues. It is possible that the ratepayers are better served than if a workhouse were built in another portion of the parish; and it is probable that the paupers are more kindly treated, when the squire of the parish serves in the double capacity of landlord and chief guardian. But that the practice is loosely illegal, and open to grave abuse, there cannot be a doubt. Suppose a man to be less high-minded than there is reason to believe this present chairman to be. Suppose other guardians coalesced to purchase, build, and let to each other for the use of the poor. Suppose land to be owned by one guardian, bricks made by another, building undertaken by a third, and so on—what check have we then? The answer is, the Poor Law Board, which, through its representative, the district inspector, undertakes to see that the law is properly observed. Let us turn, then, to the visiting-book, and see how the official visitor, who is already celebrated for his discharge of duty at Farnham, has performed this duty. His inspections have been made with great regularity twice a year, and "Wards in good order," "Satisfactory," "Very satisfactory," form the staple of his monotonous remarks. Not a syllable concerning sanitary arrangements, closets, cesspools, classification, or the ownership of the house. Not a grumble, scarcely a suggestion. That some vegetables should be moved from one empty room to another, is positively the most important recommendation made for years. Another entry, in which some minor alterations are suggested, has under it, as the guardians' minute thereupon, "refer to the landlord, and request him to make the changes advised." That is, refer to our chief, and see whether he will put his hand in his pocket, as owner, to satisfy a request officially made by himself as guardian. Comment is needless upon a system of control which makes this state of things possible, and we left the

workhouse honestly wondering that its abuses are so few.

Then came the question, argued earnestly and anxiously on our way home—How are securities to be made stronger, and laxity and cruelty less frequent? Our answer was—Publicity. Our workhouses must no longer be close boroughs, jobbed and managed, or mismanaged, by a clique or coterie. Inspection must be in the hands of the ratepayers, as well as of an official who lives in the county, who is on terms of friendly intimacy with the guardians, and who, having reported for the last thirty years that everything is in capital order, cannot well eat his own words, and stigmatise wards and infirmaries as imperfect now. At present, a painstaking inspector is to be pitied, for he has no reward but unpopularity and a conviction that in the most careful of his investigations he is beating the air. He reports unfavourably to the Poor Law Board, and a letter is sent from Whitehall to the country guardians, advising that the recommendations made by their officer be carried out. The guardians—we are quoting no imaginary case, but one which is constantly occurring—either order the official communication to "lie on the table," or argue the point with their Whitehall censors, showing how, with all due respect for the inspector in a general way, they cannot but feel that in this particular instance he is utterly wrong, and they must therefore decline to incur the expenditure advised. Then comes a pause. Meanwhile the months roll on, and the inspector visits the workhouse again, sees the same abuses, reports as before, and another official letter is sent to the guardians. This is either unanswered, or again answered as we have said. What happens then? Is the department irritated, or stimulated into action, or hurt at its own powerlessness? Not a bit of it. "*Put by*" is written on the papers relating to what is called "that troublesome case," and the matter drops into oblivion, the inspector becoming known as a man giving needless trouble. It may be a foul drain, killing off its tens or hundreds every year; a mode of dispensing medicines which ensures fatal accidents from blundering; or a defect in an infirmary ward which is slowly torturing the helpless into their graves. No matter. The Poor Law Board "has the honour to be," and, having acknowledged a report and made a request, comfortably washes its hands of the business, and feels it has done its duty. "The Poor Law Board," said a chairman of a board of guardians in conversation the other day, "appeal to the Poor Law Board! strengthen the Poor Law Board! Why, it's the greatest sham and obstructive of us all. Guardians are bad enough, and stupid enough, and sometimes corrupt enough; but for downright causing of evil, the government 'safeguard' is the worst of all. We've never applied to it for advice in a difficulty, and had a satisfactory answer. Many a time have the obstructives at our board—the fellows who've but one notion of a pauper, something to starve, or put down, or get rid of

—many a time have these used the Poor Law Board as an instrument against those anxious for humanity to the poor. Besides, if all I hear be true, the Board itself is as mythical as its influence for good. Keep quiet, avoid disturbance, and consequent unpopularity. Don't rouse people against us and make a renewal of the bill under which we claim our comfortable salaries impossible — those have been the outspoken tenets of 'the Board.' "Is it possible," we asked, "that successive Home Secretaries, the Presidents of the Council, and their colleagues in the Cabinet, can have been so mean-spirited and base?" "Not at all. But these high functionaries are only the sham board. The Poor Law Board potential is made up of the secretary and one or two colleagues. These are the men upon whom the responsibility of past and present policy rests. The parliamentary secretaries and the president are helplessly in their hands; and it is notorious in which direction the strings have been pulled. Let us have a succinct statement of what these paid advisers have done for the poor or for the country in the years during which they have drawn the public money; and let us hear why the secretariat complained of by one Poor Law President, Mr. Matthew Baines, as 'too large,' has been considerably increased since his time."

If it be true that the secretary of this precious department is its real chief, let us have the fact made known to parliament and to the country, and responsibility properly awarded. There is neither merit nor justice in making a particular workhouse or a particular official the scapegoat of the rest—unless it be in the hope of reforming all. The rank abuses which are inseparable from the system must be traced to their source, and a righteous control established, to which both careless or corrupt guardians and supine officials must bend. Purging Whitehall may prove to be the only mode of securing wholesome workhouses, and healthily active boards.

—OLD STORIES RE-TOLD.

EARTHQUAKES.

WE move upon the surface of the globe, as a humorist who was also a philosopher once observed, knowing no more of its central contents than flies do of what is inside a Woolwich shell over which they crawl. There is fire, we know, because Vesuvius, Stromboli, and other volcanoes, are so many furnace-doors, occasionally open, through which we see the gushes of flame. There is an explosive and destructive power, too, offspring of those terrible passions into which that great dumb monster, the earth, sometimes breaks, to the horror and destruction of poor fragile humanity—offspring to which we give the dreaded name of earthquakes.

A certain fantastic old thinker about the cosmogony, who considered the earth to be a huge living animal, bristled with forests, encrusted with mountains, and speckled with oceans and lakes, would no doubt have really believed our

metaphor to be a solid fact. He would have affirmed that earthquakes were really the shuddering of a vast megalosaurus, as he blunderingly laboured to rise from his long trance. There have been, as we know, great astronomers who have asserted the sun to be a world on fire, a glowing, vast, red-hot asbestos, coal in the heavens, at once a beacon, a furnace, a fireplace, and a huge central aerial chandelier to the system it focuses. Other stargazers have assured us that the moon is a burnt-out world—a great cinder of lakes and mountains, now nearly all named and surveyed, and lit only by reflexion from our planet. Men signally wise in extracting sunbeams from cucumbers, and in trying to gauge the infinite with a pint cup, have assured audiences that perpetual motion was possible, because our earth is an example of the great opprobrium of science being solved—the sea being a moving weight that perpetually overbalances the wheel of the world, and keeps it spinning on in space.

But, alas! poor humanity has its limitation. The eye of the finite being can only look a mile or two into the darkness of the earth's surface; no cable, no lead-line of the wisest science, has ever yet drawn up anything but silence and darkness from the central caves of that probably explosive shell—the earth we live in. Earthquakes come, and earthquakes go, and puzzle us for ever. The destructive influence of hurricanes and earthquakes is at present as inscrutable to science as that endless problem of theologians, the origin of evil. "Men," says Richter, "rear pyramids, and try to build for eternal duration; but the great Shaper of the world seems to have inserted into our globe's ingredients the elements of its future destruction. The world is, in fact, a live shell, with a time-match in it, which is burning slowly in its socket."

Among the greatest earthquakes of modern times, that at Lima, on the 28th of October, 1746, stands pre-eminent, as it also extended to Callao, and eighteen thousand persons perished among the ruins. This convulsion, which spread along the coast one hundred leagues to the north and one hundred to the south, began about half-past ten at night. The noise, the shock, and the ruin took place in the space of only four minutes. The day being one dedicated to St. Simon and St. Jude, the people of Lima attributed to the agency of those saints the fact that only eighteen thousand persons perished out of a population of fifty thousand. Vast quantities of gold, silver, and jewels were buried among the seventy-four churches and the fourteen monasteries. A great many nuns perished, and seventy sick persons were killed in one hospital alone. The public fountains were buried, the statues of the Spanish kings crushed, and the streets barricaded with fallen houses. As for Callao, it was utterly destroyed, and even its very shape changed by huge heaps of sand and gravel. At the moment of the earthquake, the sea rose mountains high, and rolled on till it buried the city, and destroyed every-

thing, except the two great gates. Of the five thousand inhabitants, only about two hundred escaped by clinging to timbers and pieces of wreck. The vessels at anchor off Callao either foundered at their moorings, or were washed beyond the city with an irresistible violence. During the lull of the earthquake, there could be heard no sound but the screams, cries, and groans of the drowning, and the prayers and exhortations of the brave Franciscan monks, who, till the waters choked them, continued their prayers and hymns. Great vaults, piled with corn, tallow, jars of wine, timber, iron, tin, and copper, were all destroyed. The destruction of Callao caused fresh terror to Lima. There, at daybreak, the brave viceroy, the Marquis of Villa Garcia, appeared on horseback in the streets, and issued orders for the repair of the aqueducts, and for procuring corn from the outlying provinces.

The Spanish governor of Lima also ordered the dead bodies to be collected in the churches, and to be as rapidly interred as possible, and instantly erected gibbets in the public places for the swift execution of thieves.

But the most tremendous earthquake of modern times was, however, that of Lisbon, in 1755. Those who know the Lisbon of the present day, throned on its three hills and mirrored in the Tagus, its noble amphitheatre of towers and palaces standing out against a background of olive woods and vineyards, will remember how calm and stately it rises from the river-side, almost equal to Stamboul itself in its royal beauty. Its palaces, faced with tiles of blue and green porcelain, give the city a quaint and somewhat Chinese character, while in the principal streets huge masses of orange and pomegranate blossom trail down the garden walls, and hang from the terraces of huge structures, once convents. It is pleasant to walk in that vast Black Horse Square, as our seamen call the Prada de Commercio, in the centre of which stands a fine colossal Commendatore sort of statue of Joseph the First on horseback. Three streets lead from this to even a larger square. Very beautiful and very dirty is the Lisbon we know, in our time.

On the 1st of November, 1755, the people of Lisbon had risen as usual, and looked out upon Belem and the Tagus, the little villas among the olive-groves, the orange-trees, the bull-ring, the hospitals, the convents, and the shops. In the seventy-five convents and forty churches of Lisbon the bells had tinkled, and the early prayer been said. The clear blue air roofed the city; the birds were singing their matins in the suburb gardens of Alcantara and Campo Grande. There was no omen of evil; it was a hopeful day, and the river lay, for mile after mile, calm in the early sunlight.

Suddenly there came a convulsive tremor through the city, and it fell to pieces like a children's tower of cards. It was a great festival that morning; the churches were full of kneeling crowds, and starry with wax-candles, and luminous with lamps. In a moment, roofs crashed in, towers fell, arcades gaped in two,

palaces tottered, steeples snapped, walls were sundered. The air grew black with rising clouds of dust, and was filled with the crash of ceaseless destruction, and the groans and screams of the stricken and the dying. At the same time, as if the terrors of the Apocalypse had broken at last on Lisbon, the sea, agitated to its depths by the horrible convulsion, rose and spread over the shore. One of the quays also opened its dark jaws, and swallowed, in an instant, six hundred persons who had taken refuge on it. In a minute or two more, fresh calamities fell on the unhappy city, for the fires being hurled down among the fallen timbers, irresistible conflagrations broke out in several parts of the city.

An eye-witness describes the scene with simple force of detail. He says: "I perceived the house begin to shake, but did not apprehend the cause; but as I saw the neighbours about were all running down-stairs, I also made the best of my way, and by the time I had crossed the street and got under the piazzas of some low houses, it was darker than the darkest night I ever saw, and continued so for about a minute, occasioned by the clouds of dust from the falling of houses on all sides. After it had cleared up, I ran into a large square adjoining the palace on the west, the street I lived in to the north, the river to the south, and the custom-houses and warehouses to the east. But this dismal earthquake had such an influence upon the sea and river, that the water rose in about ten minutes several yards perpendicular. In that time I ran back into my room, got my hat and my cloak, locked up my room, and returned; but being alarmed with a cry that the sea was coming in, all people crowded forward to run to the hills, I among the rest, with Mr. Wood and family. We went nearly two miles through the streets, climbing over the ruins of churches, houses, &c., stepping over hundreds of dead and dying people, killed by the falling of buildings—carriages, chaises, and mules all lying crushed to pieces. And that day being a great festival in their church, and just at the time of celebrating their first mass, thousands were assembled in the churches, the major part of whom were killed; for the great buildings, particularly those built on any eminence, suffered the most damage, very few of the churches or convents having escaped. Before we got quite clear of the buildings, another shock came, just as I was passing over the ruins of a great church; but I, happily, got clear before any more tumbled down. We stayed near two hours in an open field; but a dismal scene it was, the people howling and crying, and the sacrament going about to dying persons. So I advised, as the best, to return to the square near our own house, and there wait the event, which we did immediately; but, by the time we got there, the city was in flames in several places at the same time. This completed the destruction of the city; for, in the terror all persons were, no attempt was made to stop it, and the wind was very high, so that it was communicated from one street to another by the

flashes of fire driven by the winds. It raged with great violence for eight days, and this in the principal and most thronged parts of the city. The people being fled into the fields half naked, the fire consumed all sorts of merchandise, household goods, and wearing apparel, so that hardly anything is left to cover people's nakedness, and they live in tents in the fields. If the fire had not happened, people would have recovered their effects out of the ruins; but this has made such a scene of misery and desolation as words cannot describe. The king's palaces in the city are totally destroyed; the tobacco and other warehouses, with the cargoes of three Brazil fleets, shared the same fate; in short, there are few goods left in the whole city. I believe few outstanding debts will be recovered, for those who have lost all cannot pay; and it is much to be feared others who have saved any effects will appear as poor as they can, to avoid parting with anything. All lawsuits are ended, for the records and papers are destroyed."

The scenes in every street were agonising to the heart, whether the survivors showed remorseless selfishness or heroic love. Some were exulting at having saved their money, and, indifferent to all else, merchants were digging, surrounded by the bodies of their children, for the altars of their idolatry—their iron chests. Here you saw a man weeping over the charred and crushed body of his wife; while others were trying to save some relic of their wealth. Many who had dragged their treasure into the centre of the squares were deserted by their servants and workmen, as the air got more heated, and the flakes of fire and the blinding smoke began to fall nearer and more threatening. Some, exerting strength hitherto dormant, dragged chests and valuables to the water-side, and there hired boats, at an enormous price, to take them on board vessels in the harbour that were returning from time to time to search for and save more, or to rescue and bring away friends. About fifty thousand persons perished in this earthquake, which also devastated the kingdom as far as Porto.

To add to the general misery, thieves and murderers, escaping from the shattered prisons, plundered and robbed indiscriminately. These men were chiefly Moors from the galleys, runaway English sailors, and French and Spanish deserters; one of these villains confessed to setting the India House on fire, and another to burning the ruins in seven places. The earthquake continued with gentle intermitting tremors, felt even on the river, for eighteen days.

Another observer says: "The king's palace, new opera-house, custom-house, India House, treasury, with all the public offices in general, fell a sacrifice to this dreadful conflagration. The fire burnt as it listed, for upon the second shock of the earthquake all the inhabitants endeavoured to fly, though many thousands perished in that attempt, having their brains knocked out, and being buried under those houses which fell as they passed by them, so

that when the fire began there were no inhabitants in the city to put out the fire. It raged nine days and nine nights with incredible fury. Yesterday I was over the city to view it: there are no signs of streets, lanes, squares, &c., but only hills and mountains of rubbish still smoking. His majesty, queen, and children are still encamped in the field at Belem, and all the inhabitants left alive are encamped in little tents on the hills about the city. Our apprehensions are not yet over, for yesterday morning, about ten minutes before one, we had such a shock as extremely alarmed us, so that we heard screams, and soon everybody were on their knees at prayer."

The losses to the merchants of Lisbon were enormous. The very records of their debtors were destroyed. Two houses alone lost fifty thousand pounds each. In one hour rich men had been turned into hopeless half-starved beggars.

An English captain, who had just taken his vessel from the custom-house, and anchored off Terceiras, describes his feeling the motion of the water, and, looking back, saw the city tremble and fall to pieces. His account gives the terrible catastrophe in a fresh point of view. He says: "I beheld the tall and stately buildings come tumbling down with great cracks and noise, and particularly that part of the city from St. Paulo in a direct line to Boirroalto, as also at the same time that part from the said church along the river-side eastward as far as the gallows, and so in a curve line northwards again; and as far as St. José and the Roscio were laid prostrate in three following and subsequent shocks, which were so violent, as I heard many say, that they could with difficulty stand on their legs. Almost all the palaces and large churches were rent down or partly fallen, and scarce one house of this vast city is left habitable. Everybody that was not crushed to death ran out into the large places; and those near the river ran down to save themselves by boats, or any other floating convenience, running, crying, and calling to the ships for assistance. But while the multitude were gathered near the river-side, the water rose to such a height, that it overcame and overflowed the lower part of the city, which so terrified the miserable and already dismayed inhabitants, who ran to and fro with dreadful cries, which we heard plainly on board, that it made them believe the dissolution of the world was at hand; every one falling on his knees, and entreating the Almighty for his assistance. The boatmen in the boats, as they were tossed on land by the sudden rise of the water, jumped on shore to save themselves, and immediately their boats were carried away by the retiring sea, which ebbed and flowed in four or five minutes."

Large ships lying high and dry at Bona Vista were floated off violently and carried unresistingly down the river, which was covered with boats, timber, and household goods from the quays. The timber in the royal arsenal was washed into the adjacent streets, which it rendered impassable. The sea at the bar broke

white as in a storm, and at the Castle of Rugio the garrison had to take shelter on the roof, and fire guns for help. Water rose in about five minutes sixteen feet, and fell in the same time for three shocks, and then the tide returned to its natural course. "I observed at the time the city fell," says one observer, "on the opposite side of the river many houses also fall, and the steep sand came tumbling into the river, which raised such a dust, that for five minutes I lost sight of the city, river, and ships. By two o'clock the ships' boats began to ply, and took multitudes on board. The English ships took off their countrymen and women, with which the shore was crowded, and many of the country people surrounded the English, and would not let them stir, saying they were safe in their company, as seeing they were somewhat less dismayed, which revived those who were most affected. Every one was begging pardon and embracing each other, crying, 'Forgive me, brother, sister, friend. Oh, what will become of us! Neither water nor land will protect us, and the fire seems now to threaten our total destruction.'"

The money saved was so blackened by the fire that for some time it was specified in commercial transactions whether a debt was to be paid in black or bright money.

The city, after the earthquake, is described as a piteous sight. Above the narrow noisome streets rose pyramids of charred and tottering house-fronts, and below lay piles of bodies half buried and half burnt. In the squares you met people who were ruined, wringing their hands, and crying, "The world is at an end." The fourth day, foot soldiers and dragoons were stationed in all the avenues to the city, to stop thieves or suspicious persons, who, if not owned, were hung directly, gallows being erected in several conspicuous parts of the city.

The next care was to feed the starving multitude, and in this good work the English were nobly zealous. All corn, flour, and rice was secured for the public, the mills were set working, and butchers' shops opened. Provisions, for the time, were admitted duty free. The merchants of the factories were particularly generous in sheltering and feeding the poor in their gardens, and they obtained the thanks of the king.

The promptitude with which warm-hearted England sent out money, clothing, and provisions for the relief of the sufferers, was not remembered with much gratitude. The proud Portuguese snatched at the relief, but cursed the heretical hands that sent it. One of their historians treats our benevolence as a mere commercial stratagem, although it happened that the King of Portugal had always placed barriers in the way of trade with England, and had evaded the clauses of preceding favourable treaties. Spain also behaved well, and received the same sort of gratitude.

This earthquake excited the profoundest interest among the scientific and philosophic throughout Europe. Goethe, though then only seven years of age, said it left in him

a feeling of distrust and want of reliance in the moral governor of the universe. Here was a great evil arising from no abused good, an evil, too, capable of no future palliation.

It was afterwards remembered that before and during the earthquake many curious phenomena had occurred in England and northern Germany, and the intervals between these phenomena seemed to clearly mark the velocity of the earthquake's advance. One of the most remarkable of these was the sudden reddening and muddying of the waters of the hot spring at Clifton.

The following are the atmospheric local phenomena, interesting to meteorologists, which preceded and attended this great earthquake.

In the year 1750, Lisbon experienced a slight but sensible tremor of the earth, and several very similar slight tremors were frequently perceived in the course of the four following years, which proved so very dry, that several springs and fountains, usually abundant, failed entirely. The wind mostly blew from the north or the north-east. The year 1755 was very wet and rainy. The summer was unusually cool; and during the forty days which preceded the earthquake the weather was clear, but not remarkably so. On the day immediately preceding that of the earthquake, a remarkable gloominess prevailed in the atmosphere, and the sun was obscured. At last, on the morning of the fatal day (November 1st), a thick fog arose early in the morning; but this was soon dissipated by the heat of the sun. There was no wind, nor the least agitation of the sea; the weather was remarkably warm. In the midst of this universal stillness, at thirty-five minutes after nine in the morning, a subterranean rumbling noise was heard, and soon after a tremendous earthquake shook the whole city. The shocks were at first short and quick; but they soon changed into another kind of vibration. . . . Another shock happened at about noon of the same day, and during this the walls of the few houses that remained standing were seen to open, about a foot from top to bottom, and then to close again, without hardly leaving a mark of the fissure. At Colares, about twenty miles from Lisbon, and two miles from the sea, on the last day of October, the weather was clear and uncommonly warm. About four o'clock in the afternoon there arose a fog, unusual at that time of the year, which came from the sea, and spread itself over the valleys. Soon after, the wind changing to the east, the fog returned to the sea, collecting itself and becoming very thick. As the fog retired, the sea rose with a prodigious roaring. On the 1st of November the sun rose with a serene sky, the wind continued at rest; but about nine o'clock the sun began to grow dim, and about half an hour after was heard a rumbling noise like that of chariots, which increased to such a degree that it became equal to the explosion of the largest cannon. Immediately a shock of an earthquake was felt, which was quickly succeeded by a second and third; and at the same time several light flames

of fire issued from the mountain, resembling the kindling of charcoal. In these three shocks the walls of the buildings moved from east to west. In another situation from whence the sea-coast could be discovered, there issued from one of the hills, called the Fojo, a great quantity of smoke, very thick, but not very black. This still increased with the fourth shock, and afterwards continued to issue in a greater or less degree. On visiting the place from whence the smoke was seen to arise, no signs of fire could be perceived near it."

This great earthquake of Lisbon, which in eight minutes swallowed about fifty thousand persons, had had a precursor in 1531, when, in the same city, fifteen hundred houses and thirty thousand persons were destroyed, and several neighbouring towns engulfed with all their populations. But the earthquake of 1755 convulsed the earth for five thousand miles, overturned St. Abes, and half destroyed the cities of Coimbra, Oporto, Braga, and Malaga; passed in a moment under the Straits; overset Fez, and buried twelve thousand Moors; wasted Madeira, overthrew two thousand houses at Mytilene, in the Archipelago, and never halted in its tremendous march till it reached Scotland.

We have no room here even to epitomise the chief earthquakes of the world. Even that of Lisbon seems trifling beside those of China (where everything is on a large scale), for at Pekin, in 1662, three hundred thousand persons were buried in a moment, and one hundred thousand again in the same city in 1731. Even England has had (Mrs. Somerville states) about two hundred and fifty-five recorded earthquakes, but all rather baby ones.

It is not for us to more than hint here at the possibility of such convulsions being occasioned by the sudden contact of subterranean water with subterranean fire, and the instant generation of vast volumes of explosive and irresistible steam. At present, science stands dumb before the earthquake, while the sceptic, credulous only to the wildest superstitions, claims it as an aberration, as a destructive disobedient force, and a revolt against the central law. A wider and more reverent knowledge may discover earthquakes, like lightning, comets, and aërolites, to be subject to some law of a different sphere, to which ours, when it crosses us, must yield obedience for higher and, at present, unknown ends.

TOUCHED TO THE HEART.

I'm not a romantic man, and, if I had had any leaning in that direction, a few Monday morning visits and reprimands from the board of directors would soon have cured me of the failing; but somehow or another I have found out that railway men are made of the same stuff as other men, and have hearts under their uniform coats.

It was no business of mine, if, while I was at the London terminus of the Great Dividend and Longshare Railway, I examined the tickets

and unlocked the carriages on the departure platform—it was no business of mine if a tall fair girl, in deep mourning, came twice a week regularly, and showed me her ticket for Westgate, return, second class. But somehow it seemed to be my business, when I had unlocked an empty carriage and handed her in as well as I could, that I should lock that door again without banging it, and then take care that no one else went in but lady-like females. Of course I could not help it, but from the very first day—cold wintery day—when, thinly dressed, she came shivering along the platform, I seemed to have some strange interest in her; and, as the weeks slipped by, I found myself looking out for her regularly. It was easy to see, from the music-roll she carried and the return ticket, that she went down the line to give lessons.

I called myself a fool, and thought of my salary as a guard, and my position in life as compared with the graceful lady-like girl who used to come floating along towards me every Monday and Wednesday morning, looking so pale and sad and careworn that I first began by pitying her, and then—well, never mind now.

One cold December day I was shifted for a week on to the arrival platform, and so missed seeing her leave; but I carefully watched every train that came in till I saw her get out. Without seeing me, she hurried away. Well, there was nothing to sigh for there, you'll say; but I did sigh all the same, and was turning away, when I saw the searching porter with a music-roll in his hand, which some one had left in a carriage.

"Here! I know who that belongs to," I said, snatching it from him; and then, seeing that he was going to make a bother, I slipped a sixpence into his hand, and ran out of the station.

Just in time: I could see her at the bottom of the street, and, catching hold of one of the boys hanging about for a job, I pointed the tall figure out, and told him to follow her to where she lived, and come back and tell me.

And not send the music-roll? No; I meant to take that. I did not know why, but there seemed something pleasant in the idea of being servant to her, and waiting on her; and I kept telling myself so as I walked back to attend to my duty.

Next morning I was in a quiet, shabby, lodging-letting place leading out of Gower-street North, with the music-roll in my hand, looking out for No. 21. It was easy enough to find, but something seemed to make me walk past two or three times before I could summon courage to go up and ring. But at last I did, thinking how foolish it was, when I only had to deliver the lost parcel, and come away.

So I rang gently, and waited; rang again, and waited; and then a red-faced woman came to the door.

"You have a young lady who teaches music—"

"Second-floor front," she said, snappishly.

"Why don't you knock twice? Bell's for the ground floor. There, go up!"

I took off my cap, wiped my shoes, and, feeling ashamed of my uniform for the first time in my life, went slowly up to the second floor, and then stopped; for I could hear a piano, and the sweetest voice I ever heard was singing to it in a low tone. I stopped, listening and drinking in the sweet sounds with my heart beating heavily, for it was a long way up; and I should have stopped longer, had I not heard some one coming up the stairs. Then I knocked, and a voice cried, "Come in!"

I turned the handle two or three times, for it was old and worn, and then, entering, stood blushing like a great girl, and trembling before the tall pale lady and some one lying upon a sofa in front of a very miserable fire.

Such a bare, chilly room, and so cold and pale both the inmates looked, as I stood observing all I could in the first glance.

"Oh, mamma, the music!" cried the pale girl, rising from her seat by the piano, and running towards me; and then, as I clumsily held it out, I saw that I was recognised, as she thanked me for bringing it, and also for what she called my kindness at the station.

"Ask him to take a glass of wine, Louise," said the lady on the sofa, when I saw the colour flush in her daughter's cheek, as she said, hastily: "I think, mamma, we have none in the house."

I clumsily protested that I would rather not take any wine, and was backing towards the door, when a sudden pain shot through me, for I had detected a motion on the part of the pale girl, and caught sight of a shilling in her hand. I suppose I showed what I felt, for she paused, and coloured deeply, and, as I stood outside, she once more thanked me, passed the shilling hastily into her left hand, and held out the right to me.

I have some recollection of having taken it, and pressed it to my quivering lips, and then I was blundering along the streets in a sort of wild dream, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, but apparently lost.

The days went on till Christmas Eve. I had watched for her next coming to the station, and, as usual, seen to the carriage in which she went. I knew that I had nothing to hope for, being only a railway servant, and she a lady; but, for all that, it seemed my duty to watch over her, though since the day when I returned the folio her bows had been a little more distant, and she had hurried into the carriage.

But it was Christmas Eve, and all through that week I had not seen her. "Holidays," I said to myself, and then tried to be as busy as possible, to keep myself from thinking that it would be perhaps a month or six weeks before I saw her again. But there was no fear of my not being busy, for most people know what sort of a Christmas railway servants keep—all hurry, drive, bustle, worry, and rush. Dull heavy weather it was, yellow fog and driving snow. The trains

came in covered with white, which slowly thawed and dripped off, so that the terminus was wet, and cold, and miserably dirty. People didn't seem to mind it, though; for the station was thronged with comers and goers—friends coming to meet those from the country, and as many coming to see others off. "By yer leave," it was all day long, as the barrows full of parcels and luggage were run here and there along the platform. The place seemed alive with fish-baskets, oyster-barrels, and poultry; while somehow or another, from the poorest and shabbiest third-class people up to the grandees of the first class, every one looked happy and comfortable.

So there was I at it, helping to get train after train off—all late, of course; for, do what you would, there was no finding room enough for the people, and so it got to be past four, with the gas all alight and the fog and snow thicker than ever. A train was just starting, when there was a bit of confusion at the door. Some one shouts "Hold hard!" and then from where I was—some distance up the platform—I saw a gentleman hurry up to a first-class carriage, almost dragging a lady with him—a lady in black. Before any one could stop him, he had opened the door, pushed her in, and then followed, just as the train began gliding off.

This happened to be a carriage just put on, and the compartment the gentleman entered was locked; but he had one of the pocket railway keys, for before the carriage reached where I stood, with my heart somehow beating very strangely, I saw his hand out of the window, locking the door again. In the momentary glance I caught, as the lamps of the station flashed into the carriage, I could see that there was no light inside, while two little gloved hands pressed down the window the man tried to draw up; and there, pale and horror-stricken, eyes starting, and lips open, as if she were crying "Help!" I saw the face of the young governess.

The time did not appear long enough to see so much, but I saw all that, and my mind seemed to keep up with my eyes and explain it all; and I knew that there was some infernal piece of villany on the way.

"What to do?" seemed rushing through my mind, as in the agony I felt I turned all of a tremble. Telegraph to the station in front to stop the train, which was the express, with fifty miles to run before pulling up?—send a special engine and tender after them? How could I do either on my own responsibility, and only on suspicion? Should I go and report it? I should have half an hour wasted in questioning, and then perhaps be told that it was time enough to act when there was proved ground to work upon. And what had I to advance? Nothing but that appealing look for aid from her I loved.

"Her I loved!" Yes, I knew it now; and I knew, too, that, to be of service, I must act—act at the risk of life or limb. I thought all this,

running after the train, fast gliding along past the platform.

I had lost too much time already as I darted along, for in a few more seconds it would have been impossible to overtake the fast-receding carriages. There was a shouting behind me as I ran; one porter stood right in my way looking after the red lights, and, in passing, I knocked him over. The platform past, and, bounding along the incline at the end, I was out in the snowy night, when I tripped over one of the point handles, and fell heavily, uttering a cry of despair; but I was up again directly, and running along the rough line amidst crossing metals and rods that threatened to throw me every instant.

It seemed the act of a madman to run now, for the red lights were some distance ahead, and gradually growing dim and blurry amid the fog; but through the thick snow I ran panting on, with my breath coming shorter and heavier, and a hot burning sensation at my chest, while it seemed that I could taste blood, though my mouth was dry and hot.

All at once my heart leaped and every nerve tingled. From the fast vanishing train came a long shrill whistle, which I knew well enough meant red signals in front, while, to my unutterable joy, the end lamps of the guard's van showed plainer and plainer as I panted on.

Another stumble and fall over the point rods—and I was up again, heedless that my hands and forehead were bleeding, and that I had lost my cap. There were the lamps plainer and plainer, for the train had almost stopped; but now, a hundred yards ahead, could I overtake it before it started again? The suspense was horrible. I felt my head swim as I panted on.

Fifty yards passed, and the red lamps still receding, but bigger and less dim. On still, gasping and choking, and drawing my breath with difficulty. Not twenty yards off, and, if I could have run, another few seconds would have seen me holding on by a carriage handle; but I could only go at a heavy trot.

"Bang! bang!" went a couple of fog-signals, and hope rose again as the engine slackened pace once more, and, almost at a walk, I panted on—nearer, nearer, nearer—the red lights growing brighter and plainer; and at last, just as the engine gave a final shriek and dashed on all clear, I laid my hand on the red bull's-eye, and the next moment was sitting clinging to the foot-board of the guard's van.

The fog had been my friend. In another few seconds I must have dropped; while, in an ordinary way, the train would have been miles down the line by this time.

"Bang! bang!" went the fog-signals again, as I sat helplessly there, with my legs drawn up, and again we slackened for a few seconds; but all clear once more, and we were dashing on, and fast getting into full swing as I rose up, and, opening the door, stood with the guard of the train.

"Pooh! nonsense!" he said. "You're mad. I shan't stop the train."

"Then I shall," I shouted, making towards the wheel connected with the gong upon the engine.

"Not if I know it, you won't," he said, stopping me.

I was too weak and done up to scuffle with him.

"Will you come with me to the next carriage, then?" I said.

He only shook his head.

"Will you lend me your key?" I said; for I had dropped my own when I fell.

He shook his head again, and then it struck me that perhaps he might stop me, seeing how rough and wild and excited I looked. I backed slowly towards the door, facing him all the time. He told me afterwards, if he had not felt afraid, he would have pinned me while I turned my back.

But I didn't turn my back, and the next moment I was outside on the long step clinging to the door handle, and with the guard leaning out and watching me.

"Come back!" he shouted, as we dashed along at full speed now, rushing through the darkness ahead, and giving a wild shriek as we passed a station, the lights looking like one streak. There were the carriages shaking and the wind tearing at me as if to beat me off; but I was recovering myself fast, and in a few moments I was at the end of the guard's van, leaning towards the carriage I wanted to reach.

So far my task had been easy, though, of course, very dangerous, with the train dashing along at fifty miles an hour; but now there was a gap to pass between the van and the carriage, for the buffers keep the carriages at some distance apart. For a few moments I stopped in dread, but, as I got my breath more and more, courage and the recollection of her wild appealing face came to me, and, clinging to the buffers, I contrived to get one foot on to the step of the carriage, and, still holding on by the iron, tried to get the other there.

Just then the train gave a jerk, and I thought it was all over; but the next moment I was on the step, and had hold of the door-handle.

"At last," I muttered, as I drew myself up on to the next step, and tried the door, which was, as I expected, fast. Then I looked back. There was the guard, with half his body out, and his hand screening his eyes, trying to follow my motions; but, with the darkness all round, the snow cutting by like knives and points, and the dense fog-clouds we kept entering, I felt sure he could not see me, though I could make him out from the light in his compartment. Then I listened, and my heart seemed to stand still; for I fancied I could hear the sound of a struggle going on inside, though I was not sure, from the rattling made by the train. I was not wasting time, for I had tried to look in at the window; and, after opening my knife with my teeth, was

trying to open the door. But the interior of the carriage was dark as pitch, and my knife was useless, while now I was sure there was a struggle going on inside. Directly after, one of the little side panes of glass was broken, and I heard a faint cry.

I dashed in the door-window in an instant, cutting my hands with the thick glass, and then, beating out the loose pieces, made a place for entrance, and had half my body in before I felt myself seized by some one who tried to force me back.

Two hands held me by the throat, while I grasped the door with one hand, half in and half out of the carriage. My blood was up. I had hold of my unseen enemy by the collar, and I dug my knuckles into his neck as I held on for life like a bull-dog.

I had the advantage of him there, for, while I had on a stiff collar and buttoned-up uniform-coat, he had only a thin dress shirt-collar, and one of those black wisps of ties. It was a struggle for life and death with me, but I got further and further in. At last, I suppose, feeling half choked, he started back and drew me with him, so that I fell heavily on the floor.

Here, though, I lost my hold, and he had me again at a disadvantage. For what seemed a good five minutes, it was an up and down struggle, while more than once I felt myself dashed against somebody who was crouching in a corner of the carriage.

Sometimes I got the better and sometimes the worst off. After the struggle had been going on some time, it seemed that the far door was open, and that there was no one else in the carriage but us two, hanging on to one another like a pair of wild beasts. Then came such a horrible reaction that my strength seemed to leave me, for I felt that in her fear and dread the poor girl had leaped out.

But she had not, for she was outside, clinging for life to the handles, as in one brief glance I saw by the end light of the train flashing upon her. In a last fierce struggle my foot tripped, and I and the man I was struggling with fell headlong out of the door. There was a flash of light, the sound of rushing wind, and then I seemed to be dashed with fearful violence upon the ground.

The next thing I recollect is the sound of voices, and the hissing of the steam of an engine close by me, while some two or three people were moving about with lanterns. I found some one supporting my head; and then I gave a shudder, for there were horrible red patches and marks on the white ground. As the men spoke in whispers, I could see they were collecting together something horrible, that steamed in the cold air. A mist came over me, and I fainted dead away.

When I could think again, I found that I had been some time in a London hospital, and was lying there in a ward, looking at a pair of soft white hands that didn't seem to belong to me, while my head felt cool through my hair being cut off.

But I got stronger every day, and soon I had visitors to see me; and one face that came, and used to lean over my poor bare pallet, was, as it were, the face of an angel—so sweet, so loving, and so tender in its compassionate look; and once, while the old lady stood back, two tiny soft hands smoothed my pillow, and a tear fell on my cheek, as a voice whispered:

"God bless you, my brave preserver."

I shut my eyes then, and trembled, for there was a bitter feeling of sorrow came over me, and, in spite of those tender words, I seemed to be standing on the brink of a great gulf, far away from her.

As I grew stronger, I learned from her mother how they had been deceived. It was through answering an advertisement for a governess that the poor girl had met with insult. She had been deluded into accompanying the gentleman, under pretence of his taking her to his home, a few miles down the line. He had paid the penalty of the crime he had meditated with his life. An up train tore him to pieces—an up train which must have passed within a few inches of my head.

The train from which we fell had been stopped by the guard a few miles further down, when the poor girl was found clinging outside the carriage. An engine and tender were sent back in search of us, to find us as I have already told.

I only saw her once again, when she gave me this—this little purse, just as you see. She spoke to me kindly and tenderly, and they were words of praise, I think; but I saw her only through a mist, and the thought that it was for the last time seemed to fill my mind so that I could only speak huskily. I kissed one of her hands as she said "Good-bye;" and then I was standing alone—alone in the world, without aim or hope. You will please to remember that she was a lady, and that I am—only a railway servant.

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